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CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES *of* WELFARE IN MODERN BRITAIN

Edited by Siân Pooley and
Jonathan Taylor

Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain

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List of abbreviations

BAC	Brook Advisory Centre
BL	Bodleian Library
BMJ	*British Medical Journal*
CA	Cape Archives
CFS	Children's Friend Society
DES	Department of Education and Science
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
DWA	Development of Writing Abilities
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FPA	Family Planning Association
GMC	General Medical Council
GP	General Practitioner
HIA	Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry
IEC	Intermediate Education Centre
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
IoE	Institute of Education
IUD	Intra-Uterine Device
LEA	Local Education Authority
LM	*Leeds Mercury*
MMEC	The Multiple Marking of English Compositions
MO	Mass Observation
MOA	Mass Observation Archive
MWT	*Manchester Weekly Times*
NAA	The National Archives of Australia
NCDS	The British National Child Development Survey

NHS	National Health Service
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NWG	*Northern Weekly Gazette*
PMVH	Princess Mary Village Homes
RPS	Royal Philanthropic School
SACA	*South African Commercial Advertiser*
SCAI	Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry
SHC	Surrey History Centre
TNA	The National Archives of the UK
UGA	University of Glasgow Archives
WL	Wellcome Library
WSS	The Waifs and Strays Society

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Gordon Lynch is Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology at the University of Kent. He has written extensively on the history of UK child migration programmes, including *Remembering Child Migration* (London, 2015) and *UK Child Migration to Australia, 1947–1970* (Basingstoke, 2021), and served as an expert witness on this history for two recent national child abuse inquiries in the United Kingdom. He has wider interests in both the moral framing of child welfare interventions and processes of investigation and redress for historic institutional abuse.

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Jonathan Taylor is a Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol's School for Policy Studies and a keen proponent of interdisciplinary scholarship. Jonathan obtained his DPhil, entitled 'Child protection, the family and the welfare state, 1933–1970', from the University of Oxford. His most recent article, published in *Medical Humanities*, examines the impact of the evacuation of children on local welfare services during the Second World War. This work reflects a broader interest in understanding how external agencies have intervened in what are assumed to be very private relationships. Jonathan's current work involves bringing together the insights of contemporary health and social work experts. This is in order to improve the health and well-being of care leavers through a training intervention designed for social work professionals.

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Valerie Wright is a historian of modern Scotland with particular expertise in gender, social and political history. She is currently a Research Associate in History at the University of Glasgow. She is the co-author of *Glasgow: High-Rise Homes, Estates and Communities in the Post-War Period* (London, 2020) and *Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy in Scotland since 1955* (Edinburgh, 2021).

Introduction

Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor

This book conceptualizes children as historical actors who were at the heart of welfare provision in modern Britain. We argue that the young were integral to the making, interpretation, delivery and impact of welfare services, and that their involvement has left a distinctive imprint on the shape of welfare in modern Britain.

Historians of modern childhood have suggested that the process of 'transforming children into investments' has been one of the central stories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1] These global changes occurred not only in modern Britain, but also – at different points over the last two centuries – in many European nations, their empires and post-colonial nation-states.[2] Thirty-five years ago, the pioneering sociologist Viviana A. Zelizer charted how new social norms in early twentieth-century USA invented the 'economically worthless but emotionally priceless child' who required specialized and distinctive investments.[3] Zelizer later acknowledged that 'partly because of the absence of historical sources, I could not reach far into how children's own experiences and interactions changed'.[4] Twenty years ago, Lynn Abrams argued that in studies of modern Britain 'the history of child welfare … has taken little notice of children's views and their responses to policies enacted on their behalf'.[5] This book seeks to rectify this omission. The ten chapters use young people's own experiences

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[1] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872–1989* (London, 1994), p. 14.

[2] H. Barron and C. Siebrecht, ed., *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870–1950: Raising the Nation* (London, 2017); U. Lindner, 'The transfer of European social policy concepts to tropical Africa, 1900–50: the example of maternal and child welfare', *Journal of Global History*, ix (2014), 208–31; S. Fieldston, *Raising the World: Child Welfare in the American Century* (Cambridge, 2015).

[3] V. A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: the Changing Social Value of Children* (New York, 1985), p. 96.

[4] V. A. Zelizer, 'The priceless child turns twenty-seven', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, v (2012), 449–56, at p. 450.

[5] L. Abrams, 'Lost childhoods: recovering children's experiences of welfare in modern Scotland', in *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State*, ed. A. Fletcher and S. Hussey (Manchester, 1999), pp. 152–72, at p. 152.

S. Pooley and J. Taylor, 'Introduction', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 1–26.

and understandings of child welfare to reassess the impact of public and private investments in children's lives.

This volume examines the process of investing in the lives of children from the perspectives of the young. Instead of assuming that adult ideologies, professional affiliations or legislative programmes determined children's experiences, we begin by listening to what young people said or did about their welfare. Children were not merely the passive subjects of adult programmes of socialization. Rather, as William Corsaro pointed out from research in contemporary childhood studies, 'children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns'.[6] Definitions of childhood were always contested, contradictory and changing, so we do not impose a uniform age-related boundary. As Anna Davin noted, 'there is no absolute definition of childhood … because it is always lived and defined in cultural and economic contexts'. As a result, 'the question "What is a child?" must be followed by further questions – in whose eyes? When? Where?'.[7] The sources used in each of the book's chapters reveal how individuals – from toddlers to those in their thirties – interacted with people, spaces and services that sought to meet the distinctive welfare needs of the young.

Three conceptual foundations shape this volume. First, most studies of welfare focus on a single service or provider in isolation, defined implicitly through its adult-created professional institution. The history of medicine, of education, of philanthropy, of the family and of the welfare state rightly form distinct historiographical fields.[8] Yet, as the image of a school 'toothbrush drill' on the front cover of this volume indicates, professional divides that loom large in the archives and scholarship often had little significance for the young. In the modern period in particular, children interacted simultaneously with multiple providers, including through hybrid spaces such as schools or clinics that sought to bring complementary expertise under a single roof. At other points, young people moved, sometimes tactically, sometimes involuntarily, between services underpinned by contradictory ideologies, practices and funding. Drawing upon insights from global history, we explore the intricate – always contested, contingent and unequal – webs of contact and exchange in which children's welfare was embedded.[9] Rather than telling the story of a single institution or policy, this volume seeks to understand the experience of mobility, instability, uncertainty – and sometimes power – that emerged from being the nexus of multiple inconsistent investments.

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[6] W. A. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood* (London, 2011), p. 20.

[7] A. Davin, 'What is a child?', in Fletcher and Hussey, *Childhood in Question*, pp. 15–36, at pp. 15, 33.

[8] For instance, the journals of *Medical History* and *Social History of Medicine*; *History of Education*; Voluntary Action History Society; *The History of the Family*; *The Journal of Policy History.*

Second, by attending to children's experiences, this book enables a greater appreciation of the ways in which human relationships have been essential to welfare. Children's lives of course relied upon the institutions, services and transfers of resources that dominate historical scholarship on welfare. Yet, as one of the most structurally disempowered groups in society, children's access to provision was mediated to an unusual degree by social relationships.[10] Evidence produced by children reveals how their well-being was underpinned by contingent opportunities to form supportive and sustained relationships with peers and adults. Inequalities in investments of money, time, expertise and power were often the products of relationships, both within the family and beyond, as well as of welfare policies.[11] This attention to social relationships is informed by the 'capability approach' to a '"thriving" human life', pioneered by economist Amartya Sen.[12] Sen conceptualized 'well-being' holistically, defined as 'a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being'. His framework left unspecified what might be considered 'valuable', but made a person's 'agency' to choose from a range of feasible possibilities (conceptualized as 'capabilities') integral to their well-being.[13] Recent scholarship on contemporary children's lives built upon this framework by examining 'children as active agents and co-producers of their capabilities'.[14] This volume draws on Sen's conceptualization to enable a holistic analysis of welfare, always centred upon children's own perspectives, and charting the varying and unequal degrees of 'freedom' offered in precise historical contexts in modern Britain.

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[9] See for instance, T. Ballantyne and A. Burton, ed., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, 2005).

[10] For an insightful examination of 'human connection' and contemporary welfare, see H. Cottam, *Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships between Us and Revolutionise the Welfare State* (London, 2018).

[11] For a philosophical discussion of 'familial relationship goods', see: H. Brighouse and A. Swift, *Family Values: the Ethics of Parent-Child Relationships* (Princeton, 2014).

[12] A. Sen and M. Nussbaum, 'Introduction', in *The Quality of Life*, ed. M. Nussbaum and A. Sen (Oxford, 1993), pp. 1–6, at pp. 2–3.

[13] A. Sen, 'Capability and well-being', in *The Quality of Life*, ed. M. Nussbaum and A. Sen (Oxford, 1993), pp. 30–53, at pp. 30, 35, 38–9.

[14] F. Comim et al., 'Introduction', in *Children and the Capability Approach*, ed. M. Biggeri, J. Ballet and F. Comim (London, 2011), pp. 3–21, at pp. 4–5.

Third, this volume takes seriously the subjective, qualitative and life-long impacts of unequal investments in childhood. Most historical scholarship on children's welfare has focused on the intentions of policymakers and the practices of adult providers.[15] When historians have sought to assess the impact of policies on young recipients, they have turned to quantitative measures, by noting, for instance, statistical relationships between the introduction of child welfare measures and patterns of mortality or stature.[16] This volume complements these studies by examining qualitative evidence for the impact of welfare. Descriptive statistics are used, where possible, to understand patterns within this evidence, but we do not seek to tell an aggregate story of an imagined statistically 'average' child. Instead, we explore the personal meanings and diverse experiences revealed by these sources. Additionally, more than half of the chapters consider how provision for children's welfare shaped people, not merely while still young, but also across the course of their lives. Longitudinal evidence from birth cohorts has offered unique insights into the impact of welfare initiatives, but short-term evaluations remain dominant in research on contemporary and historical social policy.[17] Yet, as Nicholas Stargardt's research on twentieth-century Germany revealed, childhood experiences 'often had profound effects on the cultural visions and politics embraced in their teens and twenties'.[18] The volume thus builds upon work in history and anthropology that has examined the complex 'palimpsest' of meanings that people layered upon childhood experience, particularly when seeking to make sense of the most intimate relationships.[19] We know that policymakers thought of children as investments for the future, but we also need to consider the more contingent, non-linear and subjective ways in which people repeatedly sought to make sense of their lives.[20]

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[15] A. Levene, 'Family breakdown and the "welfare child" in 19th and 20th century Britain', *The History of the Family*, xi (2006), 67–79.

[16] For instance: R. J. Davenport, 'Infant-feeding practices and infant survival by familial wealth in London, 1752–1812', *The History of the Family*, xxiv (2019), 174–206; P. Gao and E. B. Schneider, 'The growth pattern of British children, 1850–1975', *The Economic History Review*, LXXIV (2021), 341–71.

[17] For the impact of evidence from the British birth cohort studies, see: H. Pearson, *The Life Project: the Extraordinary Story of Our Ordinary Lives* (London, 2016). In a global context, see the *Young Lives* longitudinal research project which has followed 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam over 15 years: 'About us', Young Lives <https://www.younglives.org.uk/content/about-us> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

[18] N. Stargardt, 'German childhoods: the making of a historiography', *German History*, xvi (1998), 1–15, at p. 15.

[19] For a summary, see: S. Pooley and K. Qureshi, 'Introduction', in *Parenthood between Generations: Transforming Reproductive Cultures*, ed. S. Pooley and K. Qureshi (Oxford, 2016), pp. 1–42.

In the rest of this introduction, we set out how the chapters in this volume together offer new insights into the history of welfare. We then explain how this scholarship develops our understanding of sources for, and approaches to, the study of children in the past. Finally, we introduce the precise contributions that the chapters in this volume make to histories of modern Britain.

Rethinking the history of welfare

This volume forms part of a long historiographical tradition that seeks to take the recipients of welfare seriously. Since the early 1980s, historians of medicine have responded enthusiastically to Roy Porter's call to write 'a people's history of health'.[21] Early modern and modern sources alike have allowed historians to uncover what Porter described as 'the patient's point of view' of their medical 'encounters'.[22] This approach has also shaped how researchers explain reforms to welfare provision. Correspondence, pressure groups, media coverage and social surveys have revealed recipients' 'attitudes to state welfare', whether provided through the Poor Law, pensions, NHS, or public health initiatives.[23] Other historians have built upon Porter's proposal that we understand the 'medical market-place' best by also examining everyday practices beyond the clinic.[24] These studies have revealed that the power of 'experts' was always contested, not merely between conflicting areas of professional expertise, but also by knowledge derived from what Jennifer Crane called the 'expertise of experience'.[25] As a result, the 'patient's point of view' has transformed our understanding of state institutions and organized services. These studies have challenged teleological narratives of ever-improving services and have deconstructed homogenizing categories such as the mythic 'public' or 'citizens'. Indeed, by attending to recipients' experiences, scholars have revealed that apathetic or hostile responses to extra-familial welfare provision were at least as common as popular pressure for investments.[26] We can only understand accurately the causation, significance and impact of welfare when we place the experiences and perspectives of those who received it at its heart.

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[20] L. King, 'Future citizens: cultural and political conceptions of children in Britain, 1930–50s', *Twentieth Century British History*, xxvii (2016), 389–411.

[21] R. Porter, 'The patient's view: doing medical history from below', *Theory and Society*, xiv (1985), 175–98, at p. 194.

[22] Porter, 'The patient's view', pp. 175, 176. This collection examines children's experiences after the 1830s, but important work from the early modern period has pioneered this approach; see, in particular: B. Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: a Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge MA, 1998); H. Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580–1720* (Oxford, 2012).

[23] J. Harris, 'Did British workers want the welfare state? G. D. H. Cole's survey of 1942', in *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling*, ed. J. Winter (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 200–14; S. King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s–1830s* (Oxford, 2012); A. Mold et al., *Placing the Public in Public Health in Post-War Britain, 1948–2012* (London, 2019); P. Thane, 'The working class and state "welfare" in Britain, 1880–1914', *The Historical Journal*, xxvii (1984), 877–900, at p. 899.

[24] Porter, 'The patient's view', p. 189.

Yet, this thirty-five-year historiographical inheritance has imprinted itself lightly and late on histories specifically of *child* welfare. In 1994, Harry Hendrick's survey of child welfare – which remains the principal study of changing child welfare provision – argued that 'Much of the history of social policy … is in fact the history of imposition of the adult will upon children's bodies.'[27] Hendrick suggested that 'children themselves had remained virtually silent during the making of this history'.[28] In 2001, Jon Lawrence and Pat Starkey's edited volume challenged this assumed silence by examining the gap between adults' representations of childhood and children's 'experiences at the sharp end of state and philanthropic "intervention" '.[29] This volume included Lynn Abrams' pioneering research that analysed the testimonies of adults who grew up in care in Scotland to reveal 'a more nuanced and child-centred understanding of the impact of the child welfare system'. This methodology revealed that, although adult policymakers had assumed that family foster care was preferable to residential institutions, childhood memories of isolation and discipline were remarkably similar, irrespective of care provider.[30]

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[25] L. Beier, 'Expertise and control: childbearing in three twentieth-century working-class Lancashire communities', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, lxxviii (2004), 379–409; J. Crane, *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion* (Basingstoke, 2018).

[26] N. Durbach, 'Class, gender, and the conscientious objector to vaccination, 1898–1907', *Journal of British Studies*, xli (2002), 58–83; Thane, 'The working class and state "welfare" '; N. Hayes, 'Did we really want a National Health Service? Hospitals, patients and public opinions before 1948', *The English Historical Review*, cxxvii (2012), 625–61.

[27] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 2.

[28] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 211.

[29] J. Lawrence and P. Starkey, 'Introduction: child welfare and social action', in *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives*, ed. J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 1–11, at p. 11.

[30] Abrams, 'Lost childhoods: recovering children's experiences of welfare in modern Scotland', p. 167. The Lawrence and Starkey edited collection published two years later also included a chapter by Abrams.

In spite of the insights provided by scholarship published two decades ago, historians have continued to write about children principally as objects of welfare provision – an assumption that would be unthinkable in recent scholarship on female or colonial 'subjects' who were likewise considered in need of special 'protection'. Hendrick's revised 2003 edition of *Child Welfare* reaffirmed the irrelevance of children's own voices and suggested that the modern child remained a 'passive object of socialisation – a "becoming" without any real identity of "being"'.[31] Mathew Thomson's thought-provoking 2013 study of post-war childhood acknowledged that 'this is a study that casts more light on the landscape of the child, rather than … the narratives of children themselves'. The 'perspective of the individual children' remains absent from his analysis of how adults imagined a novel 'landscape of the child' within post-war social democracy.[32] Even in Alex Mold et al.'s research into public health, which argues that after 1945 'most people, most of the time, accepted an on-going duty to safeguard their own health and that of others', children feature principally as objects of adults' concern.[33] Recent historical studies have not considered whether the young were also active creators of the newly important 'public', capable of 'imagining' the public as well as 'speaking back' to the state's efforts.[34] As a result, these studies continue to be histories solely of how adults have constructed child welfare.

Yet, for more than twenty years, historians have shown that the past looks different if children's experiences are placed at the heart of research.[35] By directing a spotlight on children's experiences, this volume seeks to reveal new scholarly directions in the history of welfare. The chapters together contribute new perspectives to four key debates in modern British history.

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[31] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates* (Bristol, 2003), p. 253.

See also: Levene, 'Family breakdown'; R. Cooter, ed., *In the Name of the Child: Health and Welfare, 1880–1940* (London, 1992).

[32] M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: the Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013), p. 9.

[33] Mold et al., *Placing the Public in Public Health*, p. 3. For greater engagement with child agency, note the discussion of 'impact' in: A. Mold and H. Elizabeth, 'Superman vs. Nick O'Teen: anti-smoking campaigns and children in 1980s Britain', *Palgrave Communications*, v (2019), 1–12.

[34] For insightful reviews that reveal these gaps between child experience and state policymaking, see: H. Barron, 'Review: Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement, by Mathew Thomson', *The English Historical Review*, cxxx (2015), 1059–61; L. Tisdall, 'Review: Vaccinating Britain: Mass Vaccination and the Public since the Second World War by Gareth Millward', *Contemporary British History*, xxxiii (2019), 452–4.

[35] For important early monographs, see: A. Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870–1914* (London, 1996); N. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London, 2005).

First, children's experiences change how we think about the expansion of the state. The incremental growth of state financial investment, the increasingly universal and national reach of state provision and the rising authority of state-legitimated adult experts are significant shifts over the last 200 years.[36] For instance, the national state employed no one with specialist responsibility for any aspect of children's welfare until the 1833 Factory Act required inspectors of child labour to be appointed.[37] In early twenty-first-century England, there were 946,000 employees of state-funded schools, 46,000 NHS staff specializing in paediatric care and more than 30,000 children and family social workers.[38] It is clear that a transformation in children's services had taken place. Yet, when we focus on how children experienced expanding welfare provision, the national government fades into the background. Chapters in this volume reveal the locally embedded nature of state provision across Britain and its empire. Even when national legislation and funding underpinned investments, the central state remained largely invisible to young recipients. Research by Lamb, Pooley and Taylor reveals how agencies with local authority superseded Westminster and Whitehall in the eyes of nineteenth- and twentieth-century children. Indeed, Taylor and Wright's chapters on post-war London and Glasgow respectively indicate that these perceptions were underpinned by the significant autonomy enjoyed by local authorities into the later twentieth century. Additionally, an enduring and unpredictable gulf separated the aims of the state and its implementation in practice. These disparities did not always narrow over time. The chapters by Swartz and Lynch reveal that the UK government was, if anything, more willing to react rapidly to concerns about the welfare of child migrants in South

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[36] D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (Basingstoke, 2009).

[37] P. Kirby, *Child Workers and Industrial Health in Britain, 1780–1850* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 33, p. 99.

[38] All recorded as full-time equivalents. 'Children's social work workforce 2019', Department for Education, Official Statistics, 27 Feb. 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-work-workforce-2019> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; 'Pediatrics staff in England by nationality and main staff group supplementary information', NHS Digital, 7 Feb. 2018 <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/find-data-and-publications/supplementary-information/2018-supplementary-information-files/staff-numbers/pediatrics-staff-in-england-by-nationality-and-main-staff-group-supplementary-information> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; 'School workforce in England: November 2019', Department for Education, National Statistics, 25 June 2020<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2019> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

Africa in the 1830s than it was to respond to similar reports from 1950s Australia. Advances in communication, an expanded state bureaucracy and new models of children's psychological needs made little difference if adults were not willing to listen to children's experiences and to question authoritative institutions' practices. Historians have recently sought to take the 'everyday politics' practised by adults in particular municipalities seriously; this volume argues that children's lives were shaped, above all, by the 'affective ecology' of children's welfare in local communities in modern Britain.[39]

Children's experiences of welfare were shaped by 'local worlds and small communities', partly because of the vitality of the 'mixed economy' of welfare.[40] A great deal of scholarship has revealed that British state action was characterized by distinctive and permissive collaborations with philanthropic, mutual, commercial and family provision.[41] Within this mixed economy, this book suggests that charities were peculiarly significant providers of children's services across the last two centuries. Charitable independence could enable pioneering and experimental initiatives, as shown by Lamb's analysis of reformatory and industrial schools, Pooley's research into civic children's hospitals, or Rusterholz's work on the Brook Advisory Centres. In other cases, the autonomy of longstanding and uncoordinated charities hindered the implementation of new standards of care, as Marven's research on convalescent homes and Lynch's study of child emigration indicate. What is clear from all of the chapters is that state provision for the young imitated and cooperated with – but seldom transformed – the work of children's charities. In particular, the national state enabled charities to dominate the provision of children's services that were most controversial in challenging the authority of parents, whether through residential care, emigration or sexual health services.

This volume argues that historians have been too willing to accept uncritically the significance of interventions by the UK government. Reforms initiated by the Edwardian New Liberals, including free school meals from 1906, the school medical service from 1907 and the Children Act from 1908, crystallized and disseminated earlier local and voluntary initiatives, but did not transform most children's lives. William Beveridge's post-war welfare state introduced truly revolutionary universal services for children living in private families, including family allowances, free healthcare and free secondary education. Yet, these changes did not transform the experiences of children who relied most heavily on extra-familial welfare provision: those in state-funded residential care. Thus, a chronology emerges that reveals both significant continuity and greater inequality in children's experiences of welfare across the century from the 1870–80s to the 1970–80s. If we attend to children's experiences, we need to rethink the classic historiographical narrative of the 'road to 1945'.[42] This framework may offer insights when analysing aggregate evidence for the welfare of families supported by a male breadwinner, but children's experiences suggest a more uneven chronology of innovation and stagnation.

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[39] S. Brooke, 'Space, emotions and the everyday: the affective ecology of 1980s London', *Twentieth Century British History*, xxviii (2017), 110–42.

[40] A. Wood, 'Five swans over Littleport: Fenland folklore and popular memory, 1810–1978', in *History after Hobsbawm: Writing the Past for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. J. H. Arnold, M. Hilton and J. Rüger (Oxford, 2017), 225–41, quotation from abstract.

[41] G. Finlayson, 'A moving frontier: voluntarism and the state in British social welfare 1911–1949', *Twentieth Century British History*, i (1990), 183–206; J. Lewis, 'Family provision of health and welfare in the mixed economy of care in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries', *Social History of Medicine*, viii (1995), 1–16; M. Hilton et al., *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013); S. Roddy, J-M. Strange and B. Taithe, *The Charity Market and Humanitarianism in Britain, 1870–1912* (London, 2018).

Second, this volume builds on important scholarly debates about expert categorization to ask how children experienced the expert-led process that Ian Hacking terms 'making up people'.[43] According to Hacking, the application of labels transformed how those who were subject to labelling lived and were understood.[44] While Sen has suggested that a person's 'agency' to choose from a range of feasible possibilities is integral to their well-being, Hacking has argued that 'making up people changes the space of possibilities for personhood'.[45] Scholars have proposed that the 'possibilities for personhood' offered to children were constrained by newly prominent binary categories. In the 2003 edition of Harry Hendrick's monograph *Child Welfare*, Hendrick suggested that three binaries – mind/body; victim/threat; normal/abnormal – can help to explain social policy's changing goals, practices and perceptions of childhood. Hendrick contended, for example, that policymakers' primary concern for children's bodies was replaced from 1914 by a greater interest in their minds, as children's 'mental welfare' began to attract the attention of organizations such as the British Paediatric Association and the National Institute of Clinical Psychology.[46]

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[42] P. Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London, 1994).

[43] I. Hacking, 'Making up people', in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. T. C. Heller, M. Sosna and D. E. Wellbery (Stanford, 1986), pp. 222–36.

[44] J. Crane and C. Sewell, '"Made up people": an interdisciplinary approach to labelling and the construction of people in post-war history', *Exchanges*, i (2014), 237–45, at p. 238.

[45] Hacking, 'Making up people', p. 229.

[46] Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates*, pp. 4–5. See also: Levene, 'Family breakdown', pp. 68–70.

Although Hendrick emphasized that he was not 'suggesting that the entire range of social policies for children' could be fitted into this schema, many historians have adopted this model.[47] John Stewart's study of child guidance explored the ways in which the binary of normal and abnormal informed the delivery of new forms of mid-twentieth-century expertise.[48] Though drawing upon different forms of authoritative knowledge, Louise Jackson argued that Hendrick's dualism of victim and threat 'can be used to explain the problematic position of the sexually abused girl child in Victorian and Edwardian society'.[49]

There is nothing wrong with using binaries as analytical categories. Evidence for social experience in this volume reveals, however, that children more often lived between or outside categories constructed by adult experts. These insights require historians to rethink existing chronologies. Pooley's chapter, for example, shows that children were sensitive to the ways in which bodily impairment marked them out from peers, long before the Board of Education categorized them as 'abnormal' through investment in special schools from 1893. Soares' research reveals how some children in institutional care sustained affective bonds with birth families in the decades after charities aimed to have replaced these 'degraded' relationships with a 'normal' institutional family. Children's actions imply that, in determining what they felt to be 'normal', the judgements of face-to-face peers and family were at least as significant as categorizations made by distant adults with professional authority.[50] This evidence suggests that we have over-emphasized the impact of expert-led turning points that dominate histories of welfare. Body and mind also emerge as inseparable concerns when we place children's experiences at the centre of analyses. Chapters by both Marven and Lynch reveal the profound, and often life-long, psychological effects of physical practices enacted within welfare institutions. The third binary of children as 'victims' or 'threats' was widespread rhetorically, but all of the chapters on institutional care, which traverse the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reveal that these categorizations were twinned and interchangeable. Importantly, each of these binaries overlooks the enduring significance of children as providers of welfare, whether through fund-raising or the unpaid labour of childcare. The volume thus suggests that while binaries mattered to adult-authored ideologies and rhetoric, this model of thinking has little explanatory power, and can indeed be misleading, when seeking to understand how welfare shaped people's lives.

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[47] Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates*, p. 17.

[48] J. Stewart, '"The dangerous age of childhood": child guidance and the "normal" child in Great Britain, 1920–1950', *Paedagogica Historica*, xlvii (2011), 785–803.

[49] L. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2000), p. 7.

[50] H. Charnock, 'Teenage girls, female friendship and the making of the sexual revolution in England, 1950–1980', *The Historical Journal*, lxiii (2019), 1–22.

Third, this volume contributes to recent research into children's political and intellectual agency and challenges Sarah Maza's assertion that 'Children's political activities nearly always amount to instances of mimicking parents in the case of the very young … or acting out family or community beliefs in the case of older kids'.[51] Scholars have long approached the collective action of the structurally disempowered through resistance. As the anthropologist James Scott pointed out in his study of Southeast Asian peasants, even when 'neither outright collective defiance nor rebellion [was] likely or possible', people were still able to express what Scott terms 'everyday resistance'.[52] Historians have interpreted welfare recipients' refusal to comply with institutional rules as a powerful form of everyday resistance.[53] Gillian Lamb, however, argues in this volume that historians need to rethink interpretations of children's desertion within nineteenth-century residential institutions. While running away has traditionally been read as a straightforward demonstration of defiance, Lamb's study of Surrey industrial and reformatory schools highlights the multiple and transitory stimuli that prompted children to abscond. This builds on Lynn Thomas's proposal that historians must attend to 'the multiple motivations that undergird meaningful action', motivations that may 'exceed rational calculation'.[54] A century later, Laura Tisdall's chapter argues that sustained school refusal offers an insight into children's awareness of the harmful impact of schooling on their welfare. Tisdall's analysis of truancy demonstrates that experts' desire to defend their professional territory meant that they ignored children's explanations for their 'everyday resistance' in favour of theories of familial or psychological deficits. By questioning conventional and ahistorical interpretations of 'weapons of the weak', contributors to this volume instead highlight the diverse and contextually specific motivations that underpinned actions that appear superficially similar. These new interpretations rely on sensitive engagement with multiple forms of evidence, including sources authored by children themselves.

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[51] C. Field, 'Why little thinkers are a big deal: the relevance of childhood studies to intellectual history', *Modern Intellectual History*, xiv (2017), 269–80; K. Gleadle and R. Hanley, 'Children against slavery: juvenile agency and the sugar boycotts in Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxx (2020), 97–117; S. Maza, 'The kids aren't all right: historians and the problem of childhood', *The American Historical Review*, cxxv (2020), 1261–85, at p. 1268.

[52] J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (London, 1985), p. 27.

[53] D. R. Green, 'Pauper protests: power and resistance in early nineteenth-century London workhouses', *Social History*, xxxi (2016), 137–59.

[54] L. Thomas, 'Historicising agency', *Gender & History*, xxviii (2016), 324–39, at p. 335.

The volume further develops historians' engagement with agency by illuminating the spectrum of everyday responses to welfare provision, most of which were not the exceptional moments of resistance that are prominent in adult-curated disciplinary archives. This draws on Susan A. Miller's proposal that we should attend to 'the ways in which children willingly conform to adult agendas, not necessarily because youth acquiesce to power, but because their interests often align with those promoted by adults'.[55] Taylor shows how children growing up in post-war London often shared their parents' desire for residential redevelopment despite being unaware of the housing problems that predated the Second World War. Lamb reveals that not all disadvantaged children resisted entry to institutional care; some explicitly sought an institutional home through collaborating with influential adults, while others contributed to their admission through their behaviour. Additionally, attention to 'tactical' and 'collaborative', not merely strategic and individualist, agency allows us to identify children's agency even in contexts where historians have previously noticed oppression and silence.[56] Marven's chapter reveals that children admitted to convalescent homes developed important peer cultures that sought to enhance individuals' autonomy by taking collective action to subvert institutional regulations. For instance, children's desire for bodily privacy led to collective forms of agentic behaviour that undermined the enforcement of distressing rules and helped to preserve girls' and boys' expectations of age-related dignity. As Lynch points out through his study of Australia's child migrants, agency itself also needs to be historicized. Children learnt their worth and gave meaning to their own capacity in specific historical environments. The specific understandings of diminished agency that were fostered, for instance, in isolated and oppressive post-war institutions run by religious orders, could have lasting and distinctive impacts on people's lives. As Gleadle and Hanley concluded in their study of children's abolitionist sugar boycotts, juvenile political 'agency manifested most often as a result of recursive negotiation with adults' expectations and demands'.[57] Children thus need to be understood as informed actors who shaped – as well as were shaped by – the politics and meaning of welfare.

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[55] S. Miller, 'Assent as agency in the early years of the children of the American Revolution', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, ix (2016), 48–65, at p. 49.

[56] M. Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth, and education', *History of Education*, ixv (2016), 446–59, at p. 448.

[57] Gleadle and Hanley, 'Children against slavery', p. 116.

Finally, this volume innovatively reveals children's contributions to the construction of childhood. Age-specific provision was one of the defining features of modernity. Corinne Field and Nicholas Syrett have argued that the significance of chronological age 'intensified in the modern period with the rise of democratic forms of government' and rights-bearing citizenship.[58] Legislation undermined the public and political power of those categorized as children. In Britain, the introduction of the equal adult franchise from 1928 was a crucial milestone in solidifying 'age-related political structures', resulting in the distancing of those not qualified as 'adults' from political power.[59] The evidence in this volume rejects progressive narratives of ever-expanding children's rights across the last 200 years. Not only were children's experiences diverse, but, more innovatively, this volume suggests a new chronology of children's ability to influence the public sphere. In mid-twentieth-century Britain, children were disempowered by a combination of a more distant centralized state with an age-specific franchise and the hegemony of developmental models of universal age-defined needs, both of which constrained children's abilities to make their experiences and views heard.

The newly authoritative divide between adulthood and childhood constructed by twentieth-century adults most notably neglected the distinct needs of older children. Chapters by Marven, Tisdall, Wright and Rusterholz – on very different forms of welfare – each suggest that children aged around ten to sixteen increasingly articulated the inadequacy of services in meeting their needs. Rusterholz's study of Brook Advisory Centre, for example, shows that at a time when an increasing proportion of under-sixteens were becoming sexually experienced, these younger teenagers were denied access to confidential sexual health services. Wright's study of children who grew up in Glasgow's high-rise flats during the 1960s also reveals policymakers' and planners' neglect of older children, especially teenage girls. Historians have rightly emphasized the universalist aims of post-war welfare. Yet, the mid-twentieth-century obsession with maternal care-giving and the welfare of the youngest children forced older children to seek alternative routes through which to meet their own welfare needs.

Thus, this volume offers new avenues for attending to the complex power dynamics that were essential to the negotiation of welfare and its impact on children's lives. This allows chapters to tease out children's changing 'multidimensional' experiences of oppression and marginalization – not merely through age, but also through poverty, gender, geography, disability and race – so as to reveal how children's experiences of welfare both reflected and constructed cumulative and intersectional inequalities.[60] If, as Jon Lawrence has suggested, we can 'write a new type of social history: one in which ordinary people's thoughts and feelings *at the time* take centre stage – where they become experts on their own lives', we need to include children's voices in this project of understanding the 'vernacular' everyday meanings of welfare.[61]

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[58] C. T. Field and N. L. Syrett, 'Introduction', *The American Historical Review*, cxxv (2020), 371–84, at pp. 371–2.

[59] K. Gleadle, 'Masculinity, age and life cycle in the age of reform', *Parliamentary History*, xxxvi (2017), 31–45, at p. 40.

Approaches and sources

Historians of childhood have often argued that in order to understand the lives of children researchers need to adopt new approaches. Writing in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Joseph Haws and Ray Hiner suggested in 2008 that historians wanting to write about 'children themselves – as opposed to what adults thought about children – needed to change their methods and their thinking'.[62] This volume takes a different perspective and starts from the understanding that we do not need specialist tools as historians of childhood. Children's lives can be understood with the same diverse range of sources and approaches that are used to understand the lives of marginalized adults. This is partly because, as Christina Benninghaus et al. have noted, the methodological problems confronting historians of childhood are 'just a special case of a far larger problem of understanding history through … records created for other purposes than the historian's'.[63] Likewise, Sarah Maza has argued that 'the perspective of children in history is no less accessible than that of any other subaltern group'.[64] All historians have to contend with the challenges that emerge from the fact that 'our image of the past is driven by the agendas and perspectives of the record keepers in the past', agendas which very often do not align with our own, nor those of the 'historical actors about whom they speak'.[65] In an effort to understand the lives of children better, historians have used four principal types of sources, all of which are represented in this volume: memory-based materials, sources produced by children themselves, adult descriptions of children's behaviours and, finally, silences within the historical record.

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[60] K. Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, i (1989), 139–67.

[61] J. Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me: the Search for Community in Post-War England* (Oxford, 2019), p. 6.

[62] J. Hawes and R. Hiner, 'Hidden in plain view: the history of children (and childhood) in the twenty-first century', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, i (2008), 43–9, at pp. 43–4.

[63] M. J. Maynes, B. Søland and C. Benninghaus, 'Introduction', in *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750–1960*, ed. M. J. Maynes, B. Søland and C. Benninghaus (Bloomington, 2005), pp. 1–22, at p. 14.

[64] Maza, 'The kids aren't all right', p. 1284.

Social historians from the late 1960s turned to oral history to obtain first-hand accounts of subjects and perspectives that were otherwise 'hidden from history'. Writing in 1975, Paul Thompson reflected that 'social welfare is studied as a problem of politics and bureaucratic organization; we do not learn how the poor hear the voice of the relieving officer or how they survive his refusals'. Faced with the need to 'counterbalance this perspective', Thompson analysed the oral testimonies of 500 men and women who were chosen to broadly represent the social class and geographical differences of Edwardian Britain.[66] From the 1980s, oral historians increasingly used memory-based sources to shed light on the subjective meaning and longer-term impact of welfare interventions. For example, Angela Turner conducted oral history interviews with adults who attended segregated schools for the 'educationally handicapped' in post-war Glasgow. Turner's work revealed the extent to which children were aware of attending 'special schools' and how this label continued to shape their experiences as adults.[67] Chapters by Marven, Lynch, Wright and Rusterholz draw extensively on older adults' oral history testimonies to reveal the life-long impact of welfare interventions experienced in childhood. Writing more than forty years ago, Thompson suggested that 'retrospective evidence – whether from newspapers, court hearings, published biographies or recorded interviews – does not present any intrinsically different problems'.[68] Rather, this volume underlines how the interpretative insights pioneered by oral historians have enhanced the practice of all historians, including those relying on written evidence.

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[65] M. J. Maynes, 'Age as a category of historical analysis: history, agency, and narratives of childhood', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, i (2008), 114–24, at p. 117.

See also: K. Moruzi, N. Musgrove and C. P. Leahy, 'Hearing children's voices: conceptual and methodological challenges', in *Children's Voices from the Past: New Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. K. Moruzi, N. Musgrove and C. P. Leahy (London, 2019), pp. 1–25, at p. 2.

[66] P. Thompson, *The Edwardians: the Remaking of British Society* (London, 1976), p. 2.

Similar concerns are also raised in: S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? an Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth, 1889–1939* (Oxford, 1981), p. 3.

[67] A. Turner, 'Education, training and social competence: special education in Glasgow since 1945', in *Disabled Children: Contested Caring, 1850–1979*, ed. A. Borsay and P. Dale (London, 2012), pp. 159–72, at p. 169.

[68] Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p. 6.

For the last twenty years, historians have begun to draw upon sources created by children themselves. As Stargardt noted, ‘records produced at the time when the future really was unknown to their authors disclose a particular quality of experience’ which is unlikely to be found within retrospective testimonies.[69] Matthew Watson and Linda Withey suggested that material collected as part of Mass Observation’s study of children in Worktown provides a ‘glimpse into the interior lives of children in depression-era Bolton, their dreams, hopes, fears and beliefs’.[70] Likewise, Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer have argued that child-authored sources reveal a very different narrative to the themes of ‘poverty and unemployment’ most commonly associated with the 1930s.[71] This approach remains controversial, however; in 2020, Sarah Maza claimed that historians had not yet ‘produced studies that explicitly and rigorously use the child’s perspective to challenge or recast dominant histories centered on adults’.[72] Seven of the chapters in this volume draw upon children’s writing: in newspapers (Pooley); essays (Taylor and Tisdall); social surveys (Wright); and correspondence (Swartz, Lamb and Soares). In all of the chapters, the writers’ original grammar and spelling are used. This volume thus provides a unique opportunity to show how child-authored sources do allow historians to ‘challenge or recast dominant histories’.

Sources produced about, rather than by, the young can also provide valuable insights into children’s experiences. The argument that historians need to ‘change their methods and their thinking’ to study children’s experiences overlooks the insights that emerge from approaches used by historians who seek to understand the perspectives of other structurally disempowered groups. Shani D’Cruze observed in her history of sexual violence from criminal court testimonies that: ‘methodologies that read the fragmentary, partial and highly mediated sources against the grain of the overbearing power relations and seek women as actors and speakers as well as silenced victims, are both enabling in the present and pay respect to the past'.[73]

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[69] N. Stargardt, ‘Children’s art of the Holocaust’, *Past & Present*, clxi (1998), 191–235, at p. 232.

[70] M. Watson and L. Withey, ‘Observations in a set situation: children’s experiences in Worktown/Bolton’, in *The Changing Nature of Happiness*, ed. S. McHugh (Basingstoke, 2017), pp. 103–27, at p. 115.

[71] H. Barron and C. Langhamer, ‘Children, class, and the search for security: writing the future in 1930s Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, xxviii (2017), 367–89, at pp. 369–70.

[72] S. Maza, ‘Getting personal with our sources: a response’, *The American Historical Review*, cxxv (2020), 1317–22, at p. 1320.

See also: B. Sandin, ‘History of children and childhood—being and becoming, dependent and independent’, *The American Historical Review*, cxxv (2020), 1306–16, at p. 1313.

By reading adult-authored sources 'against the grain', historians have similarly uncovered glimpses of children's lives.[74] As part of their introduction to an edited volume on the experiences of children in Britain between the seventeenth century and the 1960s, Anthony Fletcher and Stephen Hussey demonstrated that a careful re-examination of sources produced by parents offers an 'insight into the mental structure' that shaped young people's lives.[75] This volume builds upon these studies, and demonstrates the ways in which sources created by adults – from case files that monitored children in nineteenth-century residential institutions (Lamb and Soares) to mid-twentieth-century state regulatory frameworks (Lynch) or parental questionnaire responses (Wright) – enable the re-examination of children's experiences.

Finally, silences within the historical record are also significant sources of evidence. Historians concerned with understanding children's lives are likely to encounter two distinct kinds of silence. The first reflects an absence of material produced by, or about, young people, which historians often feel unable to circumvent.[76] Given archival absences, subaltern studies have emphasized the need to interrogate the methods and power structures by which certain voices have been silenced.[77] In the context of twentieth-century Britain, Lucy Delap has revealed the range of processes of silencing encountered by people when they sought to disclose childhood experiences of sexual abuse, including those 'imposed by families, by the individuals themselves, or by other audiences'.[78] Thus, the absence of evidence can tell us a great deal about societal unwillingness to listen. Second, scholars have examined spaces in which children were encouraged to deploy silence as a distinctive childhood strategy. Josephine Hoegaerts' study of nineteenth-century educational provision suggested that 'temporary silences' – which were 'generally read as signs of intelligence' – were encouraged within schools 'in order to buttress the cultivation of proper speech'.[79] Private spaces also cultivated silences. Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher's oral history testimonies from early twentieth-century England found that many respondents recalled that 'both parents and social institutions kept to a strict code of silence on sex'. Szreter and Fisher observed that this silence had led the men and women they interviewed to interpret their own youthful sexual behaviour as 'entirely distinctive'.[80] Far from erecting an insurmountable barrier, chapters in this volume by Swartz, Pooley, Taylor and Tisdall show how silences can serve as a starting point from which to understand experience. Taylor, for example, argues that the absence of any developed discussion, among pupils, about health services, both during and after the Second World War, has important implications for our understanding of public enthusiasm for the National Health Service. While this silence was a sign of apathy, Tisdall's study of post-war education reveals that some black and ethnic minority pupils sought actively to silence unwanted efforts by teachers to represent their culture within the school setting. Silences should not be understood as simply the absence of evidence and the point at which further analysis becomes impossible. In fact, the chapters in this book demonstrate that archival silences can be viewed as important opportunities for, rather than impediments to, historical research.

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[73] S. D'Cruze, 'Approaching the history of rape and sexual violence: notes towards research', *Women's History Review*, i (1992), 377–97, at p. 378.

[74] Stargardt, 'German childhoods', p. 12; K. Vehkalahti, 'Dusting the archives of childhood: child welfare records as historical sources', *History of Education*, xlv (2016), 430–45, at p. 438; Maza, 'Getting personal with our sources', p. 1318.

[75] A. Fletcher and S. Hussey, 'Introduction', in Fletcher and Hussey, *Childhood in Question*, pp. 1–14, at p. 5.

[76] This is true of many institutional histories, but see for instance: G. Brewis, 'From working parties to social work: middle-class girls' education and social service 1890–1914', *History of Education*, xxxviii (2009), 761–77, at p. 775.

[77] K. Speedy, 'Constructing subaltern silence in the colonial archive: an Australian case study', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, xviii (2016), 95–114, at p. 96.

[78] L. Delap, '"Disgusting details which are best forgotten": disclosures of child sexual abuse in twentieth-century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, lvii (2018), 79–107, at p. 105.

The process of trying to uncover the experiences of children raises important ethical considerations. Historians who wish to draw upon sensitive archival material, such as case files and social work records, need to be mindful that much of the most insightful material is likely to have been collected without the consent of children or even their parents or guardians. Historians are caught in the ethical dilemma between welfare providers' historic failures to seek disempowered individuals' consent and present historians' desire to listen to people who were failed by past power structures. The law offers one solution. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, historians can apply to view documents containing personal and sensitive material, which UK archives would not ordinarily make available, provided that researchers guarantee that they will not use their research to influence decisions about the individual or cause distress to them while they are likely to be alive.[81] In order to comply with this stipulation, researchers are generally required to replace all identifying data (real names, birth dates, places, occupational details) with pseudonyms and vaguer descriptors, in order to preserve the anonymity of the people studied.[82] Yet, even with these legal protections, the process of reading sources against the grain, in an effort to tease out children's experiences, can inadvertently draw attention to aspects of people's lives that they sought to forget. As Delap has noted, 'the survivors of abuse often have little agency in the brief accounts of their experiences that might emerge in the historical record' and researchers' interests may 'focus on experiences that survivors do not want to place at the centre of their life narratives'.[83]

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[79] J. Hoegaerts, 'Silence as borderland: a semiotic approach to the "silent" pupil in nineteenth-century vocal education', *Paedagogica Historica*, liii (2017), 514–27, at p. 527.

[80] S. Szreter and K. Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918–1963* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 74–6, 100.

Oral historians gain their interviewees' explicit consent, but the resulting testimonies raise additional questions of anonymization. Pat Thane has pointed out that 'oral historians encounter problems of ethics as well as of method in probing painful and possibly damaging past experiences'.[84] Unsurprisingly, given that relationships were integral to children's experiences of welfare, when recalling childhood experiences, interviewees frequently name third parties who had not consented to the sharing of their information. A recent project to create an archive of the testimonies of former residents and staff in children's homes illustrates these practical dilemmas. Almost all of the interviews contained sensitive information, ranging from the names of other residents to descriptions of misconduct by named staff. While all of the interviewees consented to be identifiable, the archive responsible for holding the information decided to restrict access to the original interview transcripts in order 'to prevent identification of people other than the interviewee who were residents of children's homes or in the care of the council'.[85] Chapters in this volume have developed a range of innovative approaches to enable the study of children's experiences, but it is important to recognize that the authors' findings have been shaped by the diverse access arrangements developed by different archives. Three of the chapters in this book have been subject to ethical review, and each researcher has followed the anonymization procedures approved by their review board or archive. This volume hopes to demonstrate the new insights that emerge when archives do enable historians' regulated access to sensitive sources.

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[81] 'Data Protection Act' (2018), sec. 25.

[82] For detailed discussion of these issues, see papers presented at the conference on 'What's in a name? Should we anonymise identities?', University of Oxford, 23 Sept. 2016.

[83] Delap, ' "Disgusting details which are best forgotten" ', p. 106.

[84] P. Thane, 'Family life and 'normality' in postwar British culture', in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. R. Bessel and D. Schumann (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 193–210, at p. 194.

[85] S. Pymer, 'Ethical editing of oral histories: the experience of the Birmingham Children's Homes Project archivist', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, xxxii (2011), 191–204, at p. 193.

While the law requires historians to be especially careful when working with sensitive information relating to people who may still be alive, historians also have an ethical imperative when representing the experiences of those who we know cannot question our interpretations. Although all of the chapters use evidence that children chose to communicate with someone, they never consented to academic study. As adults with resources and education, we seek to use our own power and skills to listen to past children as sensitively and truthfully as we can.

This volume does not seek to offer comprehensive textbook coverage of children's welfare; rather, chapters offer a series of case studies that suggest directions for future scholarship. Poverty emerges as a central experience of working-class childhood, but in our sources children seldom engaged with the impact of monetary benefits on their lives, whether in the form of relief provided by the Poor Law or through the family allowances from 1945 that later became child benefit. This absence perhaps indicates the emotional labour of parents and carers who sought to hide financial worries, but historians need to know more about children's engagement with money. By relying on children's abilities to express their views in a form that survives either in the archives or in adult memories, chapters in this volume are seldom able to illuminate the experiences of the youngest children for whom care was most likely to be provided by the family, especially mothers. Contributors to this volume do, however, suggest the value of drawing upon evidence from older siblings as well as from adults' records of the actions of children who were most dependent and least verbally articulate. This research is not straightforward, but we believe that this volume suggests that it is worthwhile.

Rethinking histories of modern Britain

The central goal of this volume is to show how we think differently about the history of modern Britain when we place children at the centre of our narratives. Historians have long challenged Whig accounts of welfare history, which present the expansion of state intervention as a linear story of progress.[86] This volume goes a step further and argues that children became less able to shape the expanded mid-twentieth-century welfare services from which they were assumed to benefit. In order to make this argument, the chapters in this volume are organized chronologically. Children's experiences were as diverse as those of adults, and each of the authors analyses this variability. Chapters ask which disparities mattered in shaping children's lives and how these experiences of welfare in turn forged sustained societal inequalities.

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[86] M. Powell, 'The mixed economy of welfare and the social division of welfare', in *Understanding the Mixed Economy of Welfare*, ed. M. Powell (Bristol, 2007), pp. 2–21, at p. 5.

The first four chapters begin in the nineteenth century. Rebecca Swartz opens the volume with her chapter on the Children's Friend Society, a London-based philanthropic organization, which arranged for the emigration of around 1,000 children to southern Africa, Canada, Australia and Mauritius between 1833 and 1841. Swartz makes skilful use of evidence gleaned from children's letters, press reports and a British parliamentary enquiry into the activities of the Society in 1840 to highlight children's diverse responses to the scheme. The chapter presents a compelling case for the inclusion of the colonial emigration of children in British welfare history and highlights the multiple ways in which child subjects were able to shape welfare provision.

Gillian Lamb's chapter also includes the lives of colonial emigrants, but focuses on their experiences prior to and during their time in two Surrey industrial and reformatory schools. Lamb's chapter innovatively deploys whole life tracing methods in order to capture the life-long experiences of people who spent part of their childhood in voluntary-run welfare institutions. By foregrounding children, the chapter demonstrates the limitations of familial affection and reveals a broad spectrum of family experiences that resulted in a child's admission to care. This work challenges the dominant assumption that institutional provision comprised a poor second to family life. Despite the well-documented rigidity and discipline of institutional life, Lamb shows that a substantial proportion of nineteenth-century children considered institutional welfare to be better than the family life from which they were removed.

Claudia Soares's chapter presents a contrasting perspective on children's homes. Soares draws upon sources produced by two large voluntary children's welfare institutions, Dr Barnardo's Homes and The Waifs and Strays Society, to explore the dual models of family that shaped the experiences of children in residential care. To date, histories of children's emotional well-being have predominately focused on affective familial dynamics in nuclear household settings. Soares offers an alternative perspective from which to consider the impact of growing up with multiple forms of family. In doing so, her chapter explores how organizations' efforts to create institutional forms of family shaped the social and emotional worlds of poor children growing up in residential welfare settings. This work reveals that far from preventing contact between children in care and their relatives, residential institutions accommodated child–family contact in many cases. At the same time, children often maintained relationships with staff and peers when they returned 'home' to their relatives. These friendships provided new avenues of support that could be leveraged when difficulties were encountered in later life.

We know less about children whose lives were not regulated through institutional record-keeping. Siân Pooley's chapter addresses this omission through the study of working-class children's letters to columns published in local newspapers across northern England. The philanthropic actions of children challenge the longstanding assumption that the charitable 'child-saving' movement represented a site of class distinction. Pooley demonstrates that most young philanthropists viewed charitable donations not as a form of class-based largesse, but as a form of mutual aid that was motivated by their collective identity as children. Working-class children simultaneously recognized the economic and demographic precariousness of their own households. The poverty and instability that Lamb shows to have precipitated children's admission to institutional care also shaped the emotional well-being of children living with family. A minority of children who experienced bodily impairment, however, constructed an increasingly distinct identity, less from adult discourses of disability than from comparison with peers' newly age-specific trajectories. By paying attention to children's experiences, Pooley concludes that working-class households, kinship networks and civic institutions were more significant and innovative providers of child welfare before the First World War than the national state. Elite adults thought they were the sole authors of modern understandings of, and investments in, child welfare; working-class families and their children knew that they were not.

Turning to the twentieth century, contributors reveal important continuities, most notably through the continued placement of children in residential institutions alongside the persistent use of emigration schemes. Maria Marven's chapter investigates the experiences of children who were admitted to one of the many convalescent homes that sought to combine the specialized, technical and regulated environment of the hospital with the domestic environment of the familial home. Marven's work, which draws upon more than fifty oral history interviews with individuals who were admitted to convalescent homes between 1932 and 1961, engages critically with definitions of agency by exploring what qualified as an expression of agentic behaviour. By studying how children sought to preserve their privacy and respond to discipline within convalescent homes, Marven draws attention to the pernicious effect of isolation within institutions. Marven demonstrates that children exerted agency in a myriad of ways, including through negotiation, resistance, compliance, peer group activity and play. Age emerges as the key to understanding children's ability to influence their treatment and Marven concludes by demonstrating the need for historians to show a deeper engagement with age-related power differentials.

While Marven's work reveals the often-covert ways in which children expressed their agency in long-lasting charitable institutions, Jonathan Taylor's chapter, which draws upon essays written by school pupils aged between seven and sixteen, argues that the Second World War represented an important moment in which older children were viewed as protagonists with valid voices. During the war, children were actively encouraged to contribute their opinions to a wider national conversation about welfare reform. Taylor argues that the post-war welfare state should be viewed as the result of intergenerational calls for change, rooted in part in a shared desire to overcome problems associated with the inter-war period. Histories of post-war welfare reform have often focused on the actions of the central state. Essays written by children in the mid-1950s, however, demonstrate that in order to capture accurately the experiences of young recipients of state welfare, historians need to be attentive to services run by local government. Taylor's work reveals that not only do historians need to pay closer attention to devolved welfare services, but that the welfare state was conceptualized as comprising a series of separate, but related, strands of support.

The ability of the welfare state to limit children's capacity for agency emerges as a central component of Gordon Lynch's chapter. Through a detailed case study of the experiences of post-war British child migrants to Australia, Lynch examines how contingent factors constrained the agency of post-war child migrants in specific welfare settings. Lynch considers three factors: macro-level governmental policies; meso-level organizational cultures and practices; and micro-level interactions between children and those charged with their care. Theoretical understandings of children's agency have traditionally located the agency of young people within social networks. This chapter provides an alternative perspective by demonstrating the value of adopting a psycho-social approach. Such an approach not only attends to the social structures and processes through which children's agency was constrained in certain settings, but also acknowledges the long-term impact of internalizing these feelings of constraint.

Laura Tisdall's chapter develops the attention to children's writing through an exploration of pupils' attitudes to post-war schooling. To date, histories of post-war education have predominately focused on changes to national policy while overlooking the voices of contemporary pupils. As Tisdall's research shows, however, writing students' voices back into histories of education compels us to write different histories. The decision to organize post-war education hierarchically, by chronological age, and to enforce compulsory attendance policies meant that schools became the location where dominant conceptions of childhood and adolescence were most clearly established and enacted. Tisdall's meticulous examination of children's essays, submitted to four different studies in the 1960s and 1970s, reveals that students were acutely aware of their lack of power in their relationships with adults. Children's capacity for agency was limited as a result of intersectional oppression that particularly disempowered black and ethnic minority pupils. These power imbalances were evident not only through teachers' control over the curriculum, but via the physical spaces students occupied within schools. Tisdall's chapter presents a compelling case for the inclusion of education as a key strand of the welfare state, revealing important contradictions that only become visible through the analysis of pupils' perspectives.

Adults' assumptions about children's agency also influenced the design of late twentieth-century social housing. Valerie Wright's chapter reveals that Glasgow government officials and academic researchers were concerned in the 1960s and 1970s that high-rise flats unduly restricted the freedom, and thus the welfare, of children. Recent histories of childhood have revealed that play was increasingly viewed as an important component of a child's development. Wright's chapter examines how children responded to newly built high-rise estates by uncovering a multitude of ways in which children navigated these spaces. Wright's use of archival sources reveals that adult residents were concerned that children did not have anywhere to play locally, and many called on the Glasgow Corporation to provide more playgrounds. These anxieties stood in sharp contrast to children's contemporary experiences and subsequent memories of growing up in Glasgow's high-rise flats. Children were resourceful and many described constructing innovative play spaces. Wright's chapter reveals that age was an important factor in determining children's agency, with older children frustrating the attempts of the Corporation to provide facilities that would serve children of all ages.

The final chapter underlines the significance of age as a category of analysis in modern British history. Caroline Rusterholz's contribution uses the case study of the Brook Advisory Centre (BAC) to explore young people's relationship with voluntary sexual health services between 1964 and 1985. Drawing on BAC's annual reports, teenage magazines and oral histories conducted with former clients, Rusterholz argues that young people's experiences and needs proved crucial in the shaping of BAC services. Young people were proactive in seeking out providers of sexual health services. The BAC's ability to earn the trust of its clients was essential to the development of its pioneering clinics. A close focus on age shows that the sexual experiences of the under-sixteens triggered vocal resistance. Longer counselling sessions were provided for this age group, but services for under-sixteens also provoked opposition. In the view of BAC opponents, 'children' needed to be protected from sexual activity and the confidentiality of the service became controversial. Rusterholz's work nuances the historiographical tendency to present the period from the late 1950s to the late 1960s as one of greater sexual permissiveness, and shows that age, at times, functioned as a barrier to young people's access to sexual health services.

In 2020, Sarah Maza argued that historians should study 'not the history *of* children but history *through* children' because 'children have so frequently been pressed into service by social leaders and engineers as the building blocks for various agendas'.[87] The study of children as adult investments for the future has indeed been at the heart of research into children's welfare for the last 150 years. In the conclusion to Harry Hendrick's book on children and welfare, he noted in 1994 that 'It should now be clear that the relationship has been sometimes indicative of, and very often central to, debates about the role of the State, the family, education, citizenship and social stability, not to mention more grandiose themes concerning national culture and morality'.[88] The ten chapters in this volume do illuminate these adult agendas. However, this volume principally shows that we understand a great deal more about modern Britain when we, much more innovatively, also write the lived experiences and perspectives of children themselves back into the history of children's welfare.

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[87] Maza, 'The kids aren't all right', p. 1281.

[88] Hendrick, *Child Welfare* (1994), p. 289.

1. Children's experiences of the Children's Friend Society emigration scheme to the colonial Cape, 1833–41: snapshots from compliance to rebellion

Rebecca Swartz

In 1834, seventeen-year-old Martha Powell, who had emigrated to the Cape with her younger brother, Henry, under the auspices of the Children's Friend Society (CFS), wrote back to the CFS Committee. A few years earlier, Henry had been found wandering the streets in London and had been picked up by some 'charitable persons', who, upon hearing he was an orphan, sent him to the boys' asylum at Hackney-Wick, run by the CFS. When Martha heard that her brother was to be sent as an apprenticed labourer to the Cape, she asked to be sent to the colony with him. Her 1834 letter described her employment and situation at the Cape. She was working as a domestic servant for John Fairbairn, editor of the local Cape newspaper, the *South African Commercial Advertiser.* Her brother was employed by a doctor, and they were able to see one another often. The other boys who had been sent out by the CFS could attend a local evening school three times a week and most of the juvenile emigrants to the Cape attended Sunday schools. While some boys were unhappy with their employment, and 'a few ran away from their masters at first', Martha said she would like to stay in the Cape once her contract expired in 1836. 'My time will be out on the 28th of March, 1836, when, if I still like the Cape, I shall not return, as the air does agree with me.'[1]

Martha and Henry were just two of over 800 children who were sent by the Children's Friend Society, a London-based philanthropic organization, to the Cape colony, between 1833 and 1841. Martha's letter in which she described her new situation in the colony points to the continued ties between 'home' and 'away' experienced by children

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[1] Letter from Martha Powell to Ladies Committee of the Children's Friend Society, 17 Sept. 1834, in E. P. Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade; or, Captain Brenton's Account of the Rise and Progress of the Children's Friend Society: Shewing its tendency to prevent crime and poverty, and eventually to dispense with capital punishment and impressment* (London, 1837), p. 76.

R. Swartz, 'Children's experiences of the Children's Friend Society emigration scheme to the colonial Cape, 1833–41: snapshots from compliance to rebellion', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 27–48.

sent to the Cape as part of this emigration scheme. While Martha, at seventeen years old, was 'rather beyond the usual age fixed by the Society' for 'juvenile emigrants', the 'strong affection' that she showed for her brother and a good reference from her previous employer meant that she was considered for emigration.[2] For Martha, the decision to go with her brother to the Cape indicates her willingness to participate in the scheme, and an ability to use the philanthropic organization to her own ends. Her letter, although brief, highlights that Martha was making a series of complicated decisions about the best interests of herself and her brother. Whether it was the possibility for employment there, her better health, or the desire to maintain family bonds, Martha was an active participant in the CFS scheme. She would remain in the Cape, marrying locally born Jan Johannes Overmeyer shortly after her apprenticeship expired in 1836.[3] Henry, who had emigrated to the colony aged fourteen, also remained there, marrying locally and working as a brewer and canteen keeper in the centre of Cape Town.[4]

Studies of the CFS have been preoccupied with the motivations of the organization's founder, Captain Edward Pelham Brenton, situating the work of the Society within the context of nineteenth-century 'child rescue' and philanthropy.[5] This chapter, by contrast, puts the experience of children at the centre of the analysis. It traces individual cases of children sent to the Cape, showing how they experienced the scheme, and how they made sense of the distance between 'home' and the colony. Their experiences and perceptions of the colony were decidedly mixed: while some were able to flourish in the young settler colony, others were seen as a replacement for the labour of recently emancipated slaves.[6] Some, like Martha Powell, were active participants in the scheme; others reported abuse and neglect at the hands of their employers and hoped to return to England as soon as they could.

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[2] Cape Archives (hereafter CA), CSC 2/6/1/13, no. 196.

[3] *Cape Town Government Gazette*, 17 June 1836.

[4] *Cape Town Almanac*, 1849. Ancestry.com, *South Africa, City and Area Directories, 1813–1962* [database online]; CA, CSC 2/6/1/13, no. 196.

[5] See eg: E. Bradlow, 'The Children's Friend Society at the Cape of good hope', *Victorian Studies*, xxvii (1984), 155–77; K. Honeyman, 'The export of children? The Children's Friend Society and London parishes, 1830–1842', *Childhood in the Past*, v (2012), 94–114; R. Bates, 'From suppression to sponsorship: juvenile emigration and the preservation of pre-industrial labor', in *International Migrations in the Victorian Era*, ed. M. Ruiz (Leiden, 2018), pp. 507–31.

[6] I have written about the CFS in the context of child labour more broadly at the Cape in 'Child apprenticeship in the Cape colony: the case of the Children's Friend Society emigration scheme, 1833–1841', *Slavery and Abolition* (2020), 1–23.

The young emigrants' responses to their situations ranged from acceptance and compliance to rebellion and outright protest. As Susan Miller has argued, children's agency is best understood as existing on 'a continuum from opposition to assent'.[7] In other words, agency should be read not only through deliberate acts of rebellion, but also through children's (active) choice to consent or comply when their needs and those of adults aligned. Mona Gleason suggests the use of 'empathic inference' to move past trying to uncover children's agency: to 'deeply engage their ability to imagine and interpret the world as if from the point of view of the least powerful'.[8] Agency, instead of being thought of as the actions of an individual, should be thought of as 'relational and complicated',[9] emerging out of the interactions between children themselves, adults, families, and their context (local, national, global). The cases discussed in this chapter highlight individual acts of agency within a structure that children often had little power to alter radically.

The archive of the Children's Friend Society itself has not survived, but, because of the scale of the emigration scheme and its uniqueness at the time, there were numerous descriptions of the Society printed in the local and metropolitan press, as well as letters from children that were sent back to their families and sponsors in England. Genealogical tracing of the individuals sent to the colony is particularly challenging: not all of the children's names are correctly recorded, and their parents' names or occupations are seldom published in letters or in the press. However, the traces of children's voices and experiences in this material remains worthy of study because of the diversity of responses to the scheme that do not map neatly onto other intersections like age, location or gender. This chapter highlights how children's agency was expressed in multiple, sometimes contradictory, ways. It also shows that using fragmentary source material – sometimes a single letter or snippet of testimony from a child – can still provide important nuance in histories of children's welfare.

This chapter draws on three main sets of sources. First, children maintained connections to home through writing letters to families and guardians, thus preserving emotional bonds with those in England. Often, these letters would connect unfamiliar aspects of life in the Cape with experiences and ideas about England. These letters were sometimes reprinted by the CFS as part of their promotional literature. The children therefore actively contributed to a narrative about what the Cape offered to young emigrants. Children were able to shape narratives of life in the colony in these letters, even if their letters had not been intended for that purpose. The children's perceptions of their own happiness and well-being were fundamental to the functioning – and indeed, the ultimate demise – of the scheme. Second, newspaper reports published in both the metropolitan and colonial press are useful ways into understanding children's experiences of the scheme. Third, it draws on an enquiry conducted into the activities of the CFS at the Cape in 1840, which collected testimony from the 'juvenile emigrants' on their treatment at the Cape, some of which appears to have been printed verbatim. This is in line with newer studies that draw attention not only to the perceptions of families who came into contact with welfare systems and organizations, but also to children as 'recipients' of this 'care'.[10] The letters, press reports and the Commission of Enquiry each give a different picture of how the 'welfare' of children in the Cape was conceptualized, and how the children themselves conceptualized their own welfare.

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[7] S. Miller, 'Assent as agency in the early years of the children of the American Revolution', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, ix (2016), 48–65, at p. 49.

[8] M. Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth, and education', *History of Education*, xlv (2016), 446–59, at p. 458.

[9] Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap', p. 458.

Taking note of the experiences of children affected by this emigration scheme is important when discussing child welfare in Britain more broadly, as the colonial context loomed large in the imaginations of welfare reformers in Britain and the Cape, even before the period of large-scale child emigration later in the nineteenth century. The insights from documents created by and about children who were part of this scheme indicate how these geographies were imaginatively and discursively connected at the time, by both adults and children. As Catherine Hall argued more than twenty years ago, British history has been an international story for centuries, and cannot be understood without reference to the interconnected metropolitan and colonial experiences.[11] While earlier studies of welfare tended to focus on the founding of institutions in the metropole, insights drawn from Swain and Hillel, among others, indicate just how mobile child rescue discourses were in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. They argued that the idea of child rescue was intimately tied to peopling the settler colonies with white children, and that childhood vulnerability was distinctly racialized. Needy white children could be sent to the colonies, which were constructed as 'empty' through the deliberate erasure of indigenous and other colonized people's presence.[12] Harper and Constantine characterized the discourse of child migration in the British Empire as the 'child problem and the Empire solution', saying there were both 'push' and 'pull' factors encouraging child migration.[13] It is striking that the CFS activities, and the widespread criticism of the Society, discussed below, did not have more of an enduring impact on later nineteenth-century child emigration schemes, despite their following such similar principles.

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[10] For example, see N. Goose and K. Honeyman, ed. *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750–1914* (London, 2016).

[11] C. Hall, 'Introduction: thinking the postcolonial, thinking the empire', in *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader*, ed. C. Hall (Manchester, 2000), pp. 1–35, at p. 5.

The CFS posited that children in care, a new problem category, would be reformed in the colonies. At the same time, the colonies, at least in the eyes of those organizing the emigration schemes, needed their labour or their presence as part of an (imagined) white settlement. Ellen Boucher's work on child emigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has shown how these schemes constructed the 'settler empire as a redemptive space for the British race'.[14] Unlike these later schemes that transported far more children to the colonies, the CFS has received relatively little attention in the literature. The concerns of CFS organizer Brenton foreshadowed those of later nineteenth-century philanthropists who promoted child emigration. For Brenton and those involved in the Society, there was no clear boundary between child welfare at home and child emigration activities which aimed to resettle children in the colonies. The welfare of the nation and the welfare of the empire were deeply intertwined, and this had important implications for the welfare of individual children and their families. As this chapter shows, the unique context of the Cape in the 1830s allowed the scheme to be adopted there, but also led to complaints against the Society, and the ultimate demise of the scheme. The chapter begins by briefly outlining how colonial emigration was imagined as part of British child welfare, before introducing the activities of the CFS at the Cape. It then examines individual cases of children's experiences at the Cape, showing how they experienced this scheme that was designed to reclaim and reform. It highlights the young emigrants' multiple and complex responses to the scheme.

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[12] S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 116–20.

[13] M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2011), p. 262.

[14] E. Boucher, *Empire's Children* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 8.

The Children's Friend Society and the Cape colony

Edward Pelham Brenton founded the Society for the Suppression of Juvenile Vagrancy in 1830. Brenton had long been interested in child welfare: his career as a naval captain had exposed him to the harsh realities of life for young sailors, whom he believed to be vulnerable and exploited.[15] He began to write about their plight, before broadening his sights to urban poor children, primarily in London. The CFS initially advocated for the removal of children from London's slums and their relocation to model communities in rural England where they would practise agriculture: a system known as 'home colonization'.[16] Within a few years, however, the idea of home colonization was abandoned, and the Society, now renamed the Children's Friend Society, decided to send children to the colonies. When the Colonial Office agreed to pay half of the cost of sending the children out to the colonies, Brenton proposed to send groups of children out to the Cape, Swan River Colony, Mauritius, the Canadas, Cape Breton and Newfoundland. The thinking behind this scheme of emigration to southern Africa, north America and Australia was twofold: first, the children would have a better life away from poverty and crime in England's growing cities. They would be trained as skilled labourers by settlers, giving them an opportunity for advancement in later life. Second, their presence would meet the demand for labour in the settler colonies. Brenton's scheme fits into a longer history of child rescue attempts in London. For example, Thomas Coram established London's Foundling Hospital, which admitted the first infants in 1741. Like Brenton, Coram was concerned about children's neglect in urbanizing London. It had also been common to apprentice young boys to trades in the capital from at least the 1600s.[17] The CFS scheme aimed to combine these pre-existing concerns by removing children from immoral environments and apprenticing them so they could acquire a trade.

Between 1833 and 1841, over 1,000 children were sent by the CFS to the colonies, the majority to the Cape. Geoff Blackburn estimates that 843 children were sent to the Cape, and of these only 149 (eighteen per cent) were girls, as the Society had initially focused only on boys.[18] The ethos of the Society was Christian but non-denominational. Brenton favoured treating children with kindness over the use of corporal punishment, and in the Brenton Asylum at Hackney-Wick, where boys lived before they were sent to the colonies, and the Chiswick Girls' Home, which housed the girls, solitary confinement was the harshest form of punishment used.[19] In these homes, the children were to be taught to read and write, and introduced to some trades in order to prepare them for apprenticeships in the colonies.

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[15] Poor boys had been used as sea apprentices since at least the 18th century. On this see: C. Withall, ' "And since that time has never been heard of…" The forgotten boys of the sea: Marine Society merchant sea apprentices, 1772–1873', *Journal for Maritime Research*, xxii (2020), 1–23.

[16] R. Bates, 'From suppression to sponsorship', pp. 508–9.

[17] H. Berry, *Orphans of Empire: the Fate of London's Foundlings* (Oxford, 2019), p. 149.

[18] Exact numbers are debated: shipping lists have been lost, which makes tracing the numbers of children sent to the colonies difficult. Geoff Blackburn estimates that 1,135 boys

The Society referred to the young emigrants as children, or sometimes as 'juvenile emigrants'. Brenton spoke about them in terms of their vulnerability, and need for childhood with 'innocence', which he believed was being denied them in overcrowded London.[20] He believed children should not be imprisoned or sent to workhouses, but rather, treated with care during their early years, when a child was 'a curious and a learning animal'.[21] The Society preferred to send children aged between ten and twelve to the colonies, particularly after some commentators at the Cape complained that older boys had 'not only objected to being bound, but having endeavoured to induce the younger boys to object also'.[22] The majority of the emigrants were over twelve and younger than sixteen; the youngest that I have found were nine years old.[23] Although the Society claimed that all children, and their parents, if living, had consented to the scheme, there were cases in which parents claimed their permission had not been sought. Observers also questioned the ability of children to consent to the scheme, saying that they could not fully comprehend what the move to the colonies would entail.[24] The parental metaphor was used often in the correspondence about

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and girls were sent out to the colonies. Smaller numbers were sent to Canada, Australia and Mauritius. G. Blackburn, *The Children's Friend Society: Juvenile Emigrants to Western Australia, South Africa and Canada, 1834–1842* (Northbridge, 1993), pp. 239, 283. Brenton did not specifically address why these colonies were chosen as sites for emigration, but his brother's connection to the Cape, where he had worked at the Simon's Town harbour, gave Brenton an introduction to the Cape.

[19] Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, p. 68.

[20] Children's Friend Society, *Report of the General Committee of Management of the Children's Friend Society, Presented at Their Eighth Annual Meeting* (London, 1838), p. 1.

[21] J. Brenton, *Memoir of Captain Edward Pelham Brenton* (London, 1842), p. 173.

[22] *Fourth Annual Report of the Children's Friend Society* (London, 1834), p. 8.

[23] See CA, CSC 2/6/1/14, no. 126, Ewan Christian to Sir John Wylde, 17 March 1835.

[24] For example, Louisa Croker's mother claimed she had not consented to her child being sent to the colony. See *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1839. Croker's case is discussed by F. Ashurst and C. Venn, *Inequality, Poverty, Education: a Political Economy of School Exclusion* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 60–1. On the ability of the children to consent to the scheme, see *The Champion*, 7 April 1839.

the Society, and in some cases, the young emigrants were constructed as 'imagined orphans', in spite of their continued connections with parents and families at home.[25] As George Greig, merchant and publisher, who had four apprentices working for him in Cape Town, put it, 'Speaking generally, it may be safely said that the masters and mistresses of these youths consider them not alone as apprentices, but as it were orphans, or at least as the children of misfortune, who have a claim on their generosity and sympathy, as well as on their legal protection.'[26]

By the time that the CFS began to send children to the Cape in the early 1830s, their labour was seen by Cape politicians, philanthropists and settlers as a welcome addition to the young colony. As the local newspaper put it, the children had the potential to become a 'large and valuable portion of the community here'.[27] The Cape was colonized by the Dutch in 1652, and enslaved people were transported to the colony from 1658. Indigenous Khoe and San people were dispossessed of land, and were coercively brought into the settlers' labour force. Britain occupied the colony in 1795, in the context of the French Revolutionary Wars. After a brief period of the colony being ceded to the Dutch once more between 1802 and 1806, Britain finally reannexed the colony in 1806. British settlement in the colony had increased in the 1820s, as colonial politicians called for assisted emigration to the colony, aiming to bring out mixed groups of settlement party leaders and labourers who could recreate the perfect conditions of pre-industrial England in the Cape. Although the 1820s settlement scheme largely failed to attract the correct distribution of labour, it was central to positioning the Cape as part of England's settler empire. There were tensions between the Dutch and English-speaking populations in the colony, spurred by Britain's Anglicization policies that included replacing Dutch with English as the official language of the colony. While some members of the Dutch elite supported the new British regime, many resented the interference in the colony's politics, and particularly saw the abolition of the slave trade, and slave emancipation in 1833, as out of touch with the colony's labour needs.[28] In 1834, a four-year period of apprenticeship began in the Cape and the other British colonies, designed to 'prepare' formerly enslaved people for freedom and to allow former masters to ready themselves for new forms of labour relationships.[29] There was broad social panic that formerly enslaved people would leave their masters' employ, and thus, the CFS scheme was welcomed as a potential source of new labour. The Society nonetheless apprenticed children to both English and Dutch settlers, so long as they were of a 'respectable' class.[30]

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[25] L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (London, 2006).

[26] Copy of a letter from George Greig, 18 Aug. 1835, in Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, p. 94.

[27] *South African Commercial Advertiser (SACA)*, 10 Nov. 1838.

[28] The most comprehensive discussion of this period remains *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1840*, ed. R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (Connecticut, 1979).

Letters home

One of the major sources for accessing children's experiences of the CFS scheme is in letters that were published by the Society or its supporters. The analysis that follows is based on ten letters from children in Cape Town that were reprinted in Brenton's own tract on the Society and its ethos, *The Bible and the Spade*, and a further fourteen published in Amelia Murray's *Remarks on Education.* Murray was a supporter of the girls' branch of the Society, and had been a member of the CFS since its founding. These letters are useful not only for giving a sense of young people's experiences in the colony, but also because they show how the children themselves were thinking about the meaning of 'home'. These letters are likely edited and are used to illustrate particular kinds of relationships between families and children, masters and children, and children and their new countries. The Society did not print letters that included outright critiques of their scheme, as the letters most often appeared in promotional material that was used by the Society to gain subscribers. Brenton reported having received 130 letters from children abroad by 1837, so those printed were carefully selected to tell a particular story about the Society.[31] As Boucher argues, letters printed by emigration societies often 'touted success stories and centered publicity drives around tales of boys' and girls' extraordinary upward climbs'.[32] Regardless, the letters allow children's experiences to come into focus. While there is an instinct to read these letters 'against the grain', given that the idea of child emigration goes against twenty-first-century understandings of children's vulnerability, many show the young emigrants' compliance with the emigration scheme, including their outright statements that they were better off in the Cape than in England.

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[29] N. Worden, 'Between slavery and freedom: the apprenticeship period, 1834–1838', in *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and its Legacy in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony*, ed. N. Worden and C. Crais (Johannesburg, 1994), pp. 117–44, at p. 117.

[30] Children's Friend Society, *Fourth Annual Report for the Year 1834* (London, 1834), p. 5.

[31] Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, p. 35.

[32] Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p. 42.

Two boys' letters suggest the possibility of their families joining them in the Cape, indicating their contentedness with their new situations, but also a desire to remain close to their families. William Stone was apprenticed to Dr John Atherstone, the district surgeon of Graham's Town. Stone had come to the Cape on board the *Bolton* with fifty-four other boys, all of whom were apprenticed in the area around Algoa Bay (now Port Elizabeth). He wrote home urging his parents to join him, saying that his mother would be able to find work as a housekeeper, cook and seamstress, and his father as a stonemason and groom. He assured his parents that he was well taken care of in the Cape: 'There is plenty of fruit, and I am very comfortable; my master is a doctor, and I can get books to read if I want them.' His parents would fit in well, too, as 'there are churches and chapels in Graham's Town, the same as there are in England and at Portsmouth'. Here, William was attempting to recreate home in this new colony, by bringing his parents over to work in Atherstone's house with him. It seems that the invitation for his parents to join him had in fact come from the doctor himself, who annotated the letter, saying that 'he cannot find a better spot in the world than Southern Africa for emigration; any honest industrious man and woman who may come out, will be sure to find immediate employment and good wages'.[33] Eighteen-year-old George Bottomley, who had arrived in the Cape on the same ship as William, wrote to his uncle in 1836, saying that his cousin and family should come to the colony, 'for we have not half the number of carpenters that we should have. It will cost him bout thirty pounds to bring him to this town'. Bottomley sang the praises of Graham's Town, saying 'Things are so cheap here, that he could live here and the whole of his family upon two shillings a day, and get five; it is a fine country, and only wants to be industrious: they can make money.'[34]

Familiar kinds of people and places in the colony were subject to observation. James Baines was apprenticed to the influential missionary Dr John Philip, who resided at Church Square in the centre of Cape Town. Baines wrote that he was happy in his position, where he was learning to perfect his writing in his daily schooling. Comparing life in the Cape to London, he wrote 'while the poor Londoners are glad to get almost any thing to eat, we have nothing but the best joints, which ought to make us most grateful'.[35] Peter Seaward's letter included prices of food and other items at the Cape, so that his mother could compare these to the same at home. Peter mentioned two sisters, but not his father, so it is likely that his mother was caring for the girls alone, which may have aided her decision to see Peter apprenticed in the colony.[36] William Everson wrote that the connections between home and away were important to his sense of well-being. He was based on a farm with the master Lieutenant Daniel, where he was working as a farm labourer. He wrote to his parents in 1836 saying, 'I like the place, I wish you were both here. I feel happy as there is English people here who wish me well. I hope I shall be a good boy the remains of my life.'[37] Here, Everson used the language of childhood, referring to his hopes of being a 'good boy'.

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[33] William Stone to his parents, 29 March 1834, in A. Murray, *Remarks on Education in 1847* (London, 1847), pp. 72–3. Amelia Murray published these letters to discredit claims against the Society.

[34] George Bottomley to his uncle, in Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, pp. 83–4.

[35] James Baines to unknown, n.d., in Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, p. 75.

Even though the Society encouraged children to write letters home, maintaining communication was challenging. For example, Everson remained in the colony without his parents. In 1845, his father wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, asking what had become of his son. Everson wrote that his son had been sent to the colony in 1833, and that he had not heard from him for eleven years.[38] In spite of enquiries made to the Colonial Office, his child was not located. The last that anyone associated with the Society had heard was that his brother, Francis Everson, who had also been sent out by the CFS, was planning to join him in the eastern part of the colony.[39] While the Society claimed to encourage contact between the children and their families in England, in practice this occurred sporadically, and many children reported receiving letters that they did not reply to, or never having written home at all.[40]

Some of the letters reflected how the young apprentices were thinking about the Cape as their current and future home. In a letter to his parents, written when he was aged sixteen in 1835, William Campbell said that his treatment by his master and mistress had been encouraging, and that all of the servants in the household knew their duties and performed them happily. His letter spoke to this remaking of family life in the colony: 'I wish, when it shall please God to put me in such a station, that I may carry myself just such as my master does, and if I should ever marry, have such a wife as my mistress, and then, by God's blessing, I shall be happy as they are, and as you, Sir, and my mother have always been.'[41] James Gosling was apprenticed to Lieutenant Daniel, with William Everson, and worked his way up to the position of head butler. He reported to his parents that he was in good health and did not want to return to England – only to see them.[42] Even though both of these boys, in their teenage years, were imagining marrying and living in the Cape, they maintained an emotional connection to their parents and families in England.

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[36] Peter Seaward to his mother, Aug. 1834, in Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, pp. 76–7.

[37] Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, p. 85.

[38] CA, GH 1/172, no. 153, Enclosure, Stanley to Maitland, 15 Oct. 1845.

[39] CA, CO 560, no. 4, Ewan Christian to John Montagu, 29 Jan. 1846.

[40] See evidence in the 1840 Commission of Enquiry discussed below.

[41] William Campbell to his parents, 14 Oct. 1835, Brenton, *The Bible and the Spade*, p. 80.

Charles Phelps, who had been sent to the Cape aged sixteen in 1833, was apprenticed to the Cape Town baker, William Hart. He wrote back to the CFS institution at Hackney Wick:

> I own I have been wild and wicked, and have often vexed my mother so that she has taken it to heart, I am afraid; but I do mean to amend, for it is never too late, and I hope she has forgiven me. I am living with one Mr. Hart, a baker, who does the most business of any in the town, and I am happy to say he has been very kind to me as yet. I have been with my master ten months, and can say I want for nothing; I have a belly full of food, and good clothing to wear, and pocket money besides. Give my kind thanks to Mr Shone, and tell him I am so obliged to him for getting me away from home.[43]

This letter illustrates continued ties (literal and emotional) between 'home' and the new home in the colony. Here, in a letter saturated with feeling, Phelps recognized that he was a burden to his mother who was unable to cope with his 'wild and wicked' behaviour. He tried, while apologizing for this, to set her mind at ease, saying that he was well fed, clothed and paid. He even thanked his benefactor for sending him to this new place, which, interestingly, he did not refer to as 'home', reserving that label for the place where his mother was, and which he left.

Most of these published letters come from boys in their teenage years, which could indicate that they were more likely to have positive experiences of the scheme, or increased levels of literacy. The letters sent home and reprinted, in spite of their likely being edited, and representing the more positive experiences of the scheme, nonetheless give a sense of some emigrants' experiences in the Cape. Most continued to have England as a reference point. They tied their experiences in the colony to those they had – or imagined they would have – at home. Their letters show different levels of engagement with the emotional aspects of being separated from family and loved ones. What the letters have in common is a reflection of the emigrants' compliance with the scheme: while they might have longed for their families, they did not openly question the activities of the CFS itself.

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[42] James Gosling to his parents, 27 April 1834, in Murray, *Remarks on Education*, p. 74.

[43] Charles Phelps to unknown, n.d., in Murray, *Remarks on Education*, pp. 85–6.

In a newspaper article published in the Cape in 1837, the young emigrants were publicly warned not to send critical letters about the scheme back to England. The article, almost certainly written by John Fairbairn, the humanitarian editor of the newspaper and supporter of the CFS, reminded the youths that they had been sent away because they were cared for, and that they were 'warned against the sin and wickedness of sending home false accounts of your treatment and condition in this colony'. They were told they should 'consider the pain you occasion to your relatives and friends in England, while your story is believed, and the shame with which your relatives are overwhelmed when, by rigid investigation of the case, the baseness of your conduct is exposed!'[44] In spite of the warning, there were nevertheless ways for less favourable stories to be shared, as the section below shows.

Scandals and silences

In spite of the overwhelmingly positive gloss of the published letters, some children reported cases of ill-treatment at the hands of their masters to local magistrates.[45] Until 1839, the cases were generally dismissed by the local press, with the *Commercial Advertiser* reporting that even if the children faced some harsh treatment in the Cape, this was no worse than what they would have suffered had they remained in England.[46] I have found evidence of seventeen apprentices running away from their positions: notices printed in the newspaper and government gazettes called for their return in exchange for a reward.[47] The most scandalous case, however, related to one boy who had managed to return to England from the Cape, where he complained that he had been sold into slavery at the Cape. This case was widely reported in metropolitan and colonial newspapers, and sparked an investigation into the general functioning of the scheme.

Ten-year-old Edward Trubshaw came to the Cape in 1835 and was apprenticed to the farmer Giet de Wet in Stellenbosch. His mother had asked Brenton to send him to the Cape: according to his mother, he was 'of a notorious bad character' and she hoped that sending him to the Cape would instil discipline and a stronger work ethic.[48] Trubshaw, who went by the aliases Edward Trubway, Edward Johnson and Edward Shaw, escaped from his master, and returned to England in 1839. Shortly after his return, he was in trouble again: he was brought before the police in Marylebone for stealing a purse from a local apple seller. While he was being questioned, Trubshaw admitted that he had recently returned from the Cape, and proceeded to lay out his grievances against the Society. He reported that he had 'been very ill used, that he had been sold with others for ten Guineas each to a Dutchman'.[49] Trubshaw's reports made it into the hands of the press, with *The Times* outlining Trubshaw's charges against his master in great detail. Exactly how these reports made it into the press is unclear, but the story of white children being sold into slavery was certainly salacious enough to sell newspapers. It was a particularly potent charge in the context of slave emancipation in the British Empire.

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[44] *SACA*, 20 Sept. 1837.

[45] See case of Thomas Codenham and George Saveall, CA, 1/STB 22/45, no. 191. See also R. Swartz, 'Children in between: child migrants from England to the Cape in the 1830s', *History Workshop Journal* (2021).

[46] *SACA*, 17 May 1837.

[47] For example, see the case of William Carr, CA, 1/STB 3/42, no. 393.

Although Trubshaw was dismissed as a poor informant by the CFS, the police and later the press, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Normanby, nonetheless wrote to Governor George Napier to inform him that a 'full enquiry' should be made into the claims of ill-treatment at the Cape.[50] The scandalous claim that the Society had been practising a form of slavery, and that it had been partially funded by the government, meant that a swift investigation was essential. That the complaints and actions of the young apprentice led to a full-scale inquiry into the activities of the Society at the Cape highlights an exceptional display of agency in the context of this scheme. Trubshaw's complaint about de Wet resonated with growing concerns about child welfare in the metropolitan context. Unlike Martha Powell, Charles Phelps and others who appear in the records because their experiences were congruent with the Society's mission, Trubshaw's rebellion enabled him to subvert the 'official' narrative being constructed by the Society in their promotional literature. The Society had not planned for children to return to England after their period of apprenticeship. Given that this discourse of child rescue and removal constructed the colonies as fertile spaces for the reinvention of poor white British children as wealthy land-owners and professionals, their return was seen as counter to its aims. However, Trubshaw's case shows that permanence was not guaranteed, and indeed, that those affected by the scheme had the ability, in rare cases, to speak about its failings.

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[48] CA, GH 1/129 Encl. in 26. Copy. E. P. Brenton to John Rawlinson, Marylebone Office, 6 April 1839.

[49] Copy. E. P. Brenton to John Rawlinson, 6 April 1839.

[50] CA, GH 1/129, no. 26, Normanby to Napier, 19 May 1839.

Proceedings for the inquiry began very shortly after the complaints about the Society had reached the Cape. Four local commissioners were appointed to interview both masters and children about their experiences. They conducted interviews in Paarl (Henry Piers), Cape Town and Stellenbosch (George Longmore), Caledon (James Barnes) and Malmesbury (J. M. Hill). These commissioners had been appointed as special justices under the Abolition Act and were given oversight of the children's treatment as well. The role of these commissioners in the protection of formerly enslaved people did little to assuage concerns in England that English children had been sold into slavery. The resulting report presents information from 298 masters and 595 child apprentices about their work. In some cases, the testimony of children to the commission was recorded verbatim, while in others commissioners rephrased or summarized the testimony of the children. The reports, collected by the commissioners who travelled to individual homes and farms, included information on the apprentices' work, living conditions, health, education, morals, ability to attend religious services, treatment and punishment, diet, the ease with which they could communicate with friends or relatives, and if there had been any change in their treatment since slave emancipation in December 1838. Masters were asked about the apprentices' conduct. The commissioners then reported on the apprentices' employment prospects, and if they were well-treated both during their voyage to the Cape and upon their arrival.

The young apprentices' welfare was thought of in both physical and mental terms. The commissioners commented on their size, diet and living conditions, but also on whether they could attend religious services and appeared to be happy. The majority of those included in the report (434 children) lived in Cape Town and Stellenbosch, and the report for this district by Longmore appears as a summary rather than verbatim testimony from the emigrants themselves. There were significant differences between the kinds of information reported by each commissioner – while Piers's report on forty-one children indicated that twelve were unhappy in their positions, neglected, or wanted to return to England, Barnes's report on sixty apprentices did not comment on their emotional state. He concluded that all except three of the apprentices would be able to earn a living when they finished their apprenticeships, in spite of the fact that the majority were working in farm labour. These differences in reporting make it difficult to draw bold conclusions about differences in children's perceptions of their own welfare based on location, age, gender or occupation.

Overall, the commissioners reported that masters were kind, did not use excessive corporal punishment and gave children enough to eat and drink. There were concerns that the children were not receiving education or attending church, which the commissioners largely dismissed due to the scattered nature of the Cape population.[51] Given the long distances between farms and schools and churches, many Cape farmers did not attend church or send their own children to school. The positive views of the commissioners were confirmed by some of the children's interviews. Thomas Grimes and Edgar True, both fifteen or sixteen years old, both apprentice shoemakers, were happy with their situation. Grimes said he was 'very kindly treated; and I like my situation', and True agreed that he was 'very happy and contented with my situation'. Their master, B. G. Heydenreich, said they were both 'good boy[s]', while the commissioner reported they were in 'perfect health', despite being small for their age.[52] Others reported they had 'no complaints to make'.[53]

Nevertheless, more complicated accounts also appeared in the report. For example, children reported receiving corporal punishment, which went against the CFS's ethos of avoiding this form of discipline. Thirteen-year-old Margaret Watts was apprenticed to Thomas Barry, influential Cape trader in Swellendam, and worked looking after his children. Although she reportedly had a living mother, she chose not to correspond with her. She was described in the commissioners' report as 'idle and very disobedient, moral habits fair, but tells lies sometimes'. She had been disciplined by both her master and mistress, and reported that this was 'never without giving some cause of offence or neglect of duty'.[54] She saw her punishment as legitimate, justified and resulting from her actions, rather than an unjust will of her master or mistress.

There were also a number of children who wanted to return to England, citing reasons including homesickness, lack of skills training and the alien environment. For example, William Evett was an orphaned boy who had been apprenticed to a baker in Cape Town. He said that he wanted to learn a trade or to return to England, where he had an older brother. George Platt also wanted to return to England, saying that he was not learning anything in his apprenticeship that would enable him to be more than a farm labourer in the future.[55] As George Stephenson put it, explaining that he wanted to return to England, 'what I am learning now will be of no use to me then'.[56] Michael Gibbens, an illiterate and orphaned boy of sixteen, also wanted to return home, saying 'I do not like the black people here.' The CFS promise of apprenticeships of the type practised in England, where the young emigrants would learn a trade at the hand of a master, were not always put into practice.[57] Over a third of the emigrants ended up working as farm labourers, which would have seen them working alongside indigenous and formerly enslaved people.[58] The majority of the girls worked as domestic labourers. The commissioner described Michael and his fellow apprentice at S. J. du Toit's farm as 'evidently unhappy, and anxious to change their condition'.[59] Charles Boyce had received a letter from his mother, which his master had answered on his behalf, and said 'I wish to get back to her.'[60] Thomas Perry reported that he had written to his father, saying that he was badly treated and wished to go home.[61] Thirteen-year-old Benjamin Vickers, described as 'very diminutive, and not happy' by the commissioner, said that he 'would rather learn a trade' than continue as a farm labourer.[62] These examples speak to an imagined future or 'then' at home, where the young emigrants would be able to reunite with families or gain skilled work. The imagining of the colony and England were thus paralleled by images of now and then – a sense of time in the future in which children who had perhaps not quite fitted in in England, or had been unable to be cared for appropriately, would achieve a sense of being 'at home'. These responses indicate the on-going connections that the young apprentices were making between 'home' and 'away' – even when it was unlikely that they would return to England, they still imagined their future there.

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[51] G. Longmore, Report on the present condition and treatment of the juvenile emigrant apprentices in the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, *Report from the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope to the Secretary of the Colonies, Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Children Sent Out by the Children's Friend Society*, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 323 (1840) [Hereafter *1840 Report*], p. 5.

[52] *1840 Report*, p. 13.

[53] *1840 Report*, p. 13.

[54] *1840 Report*, p. 18.

[55] *1840 Report*, p. 12.

The children's reports of mistreatment or unhappiness needed to be corroborated by adults, including their masters and the special magistrate. This chimes with Constance Backhouse's observation about legal cases in Australia and Canada, where there was a belief that 'women and children were inherently untrustworthy when they testified about sexual assault'.[63]

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[56] *1840 Report*, p. 13.

[57] On this tension see Swartz, 'Child apprenticeship'.

[58] This figure has been compiled from two CFS annual reports, archival sources and lists in Blackburn, *The Children's Friend Society* and Magdelena Brown, *Die Children's Friend Society in die Kaap die Goeie Hoop, 1830–1841* (Pretoria, 1994).

[59] *1840 Report*, p. 13.

[60] *1840 Report*, p. 14.

[61] *1840 Report*, p. 26.

[62] *1840 Report*, p. 13.

[63] C. Backhouse, 'The doctrine of corroboration in sexual assault trials in early twentieth-century Canada and Australia', *Queen's Law Journal*, xxvi (2001), 297–338, at p. 302.

The reports of mistreatment in the commission were largely about physical rather than sexual assault, but the reports nevertheless needed to be made credible by adults. Robert Whitehead who was about eighteen years old and apprenticed in Paarl wrote that his master 'beats me frequently with his walking stick unjustly'. However, his master said that he was 'very obstinate and disobedient' and the commissioner concluded that he 'shows no appearance of ill-treatment'.[64] The commissioners in Malmesbury and Caledon chose to write descriptions about the children in their districts, rather than record the children's words. These were likely a combination of the commissioner's observations and questions asked of their master and mistress. One such child was Caroline Morris, who arrived at the Cape in March 1835, aged eleven.[65] She worked as a domestic servant and nursery maid for Arthur Nitch in Caledon. In the 1840 report, Caroline was described as follows:

> health good; morals bad; steals, and is very depraved; performs her work tolerably well; but was in the habit of frequently running away when she first came; cannot read or write; can repeat the Lord's Prayer imperfectly; had a letter from her sister, who was married at the Cape, and returned home, but never answered it; sleeps in the room with her mistress; well fed and clothed; is sometimes beaten by her mistress, but generally well treated…[66]

This brief biography speaks to Caroline's desire to find a better home, and her connections both to the Cape and to England. She first deserted a master in 1836, as the local Cape newspaper included a notice calling for her return. She had, according to her master, William Collins, 'repeatedly left her Master's service without reason, and has amused the credulous with dismal stories of ill-usage, — all false and differing from each other'.[67] In 1837, she ran away from another employer.[68] It is difficult to know why she did not return her sister's letter, when many of the other children maintained at least some contact with family members. Her running away – a rare but not unheard of form of resistance from CFS apprentices – indicates a lack of attachment to her employer's home, and the desire to seek out a new home elsewhere.

Sometimes children's testimony was dismissed out of hand. For example, there were children who had apparently lost the ability to speak English in the six years they had lived with Dutch masters and formerly enslaved and indigenous people who likely spoke a combination of Dutch and other languages. It is unlikely that the emigrants had altogether lost their ability to comprehend English, but this was reported as 'deception' and was 'clearly proved to have arisen from some wantonness on the part of the children, or with a view to excite compassion'.[69] Even though these reports were dismissed, they nonetheless indicate the young emigrants' diverse responses to the enquiry. Being unable to answer the questions of the commissioners could have been an act of resistance, but it could also have indicated some trauma. Speaking English was associated with being civilized, both in the Cape and in the empire more broadly.[70] The idea of the children losing this language was a sign of their being unprotected in the colonies, possibly assimilating with the wrong parts of the Cape settler society. The anxiety here was that the children had remade 'home' too successfully in the colony, failing to keep England, and English, as their home language, and their connection to home.

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[64] *1840 Report*, p. 15.

[65] CA, CSC 2/6/1/14/126.

[66] *1840 Report*, p. 21.

[67] *SACA*, 17 Aug. 1836.

[68] *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 3 July 1837.

The resulting report is unusual in the recording of the children's perspectives on their situations, but there were questions at the time about how much the children were able to say in front of their masters, and the methods used in the investigation. Reverend James Sanders, who had been sent to the colony to see to the spiritual needs of the young emigrants, was a vocal critic of the report. Given that he did not want to be seen as meddling in the investigation, he had 'remained a quiet spectator during the whole of the Enquiry'. Sanders identified other problems with the investigation: the special justices had been asked to investigate cases covering large districts of land, often beyond their original jurisdiction. This meant they were unlikely to have 'previous local knowledge of the parties'. He also worried that masters had taken the opportunity of buying the apprentices new clothing and had tried to 'correct anything that was amiss' before they were visited by the commissioners. His biggest concern was that 'the enquiry was conducted in the presence of the masters, and that lads very soon forget however much they may have suffered, and when I know very well that many of them are too much stupified to tell their own stories'.[71] The ability of the children to express themselves, and to have their 'true' voices heard, was called into question. In contrast to some of the masters, who spoke of children distorting their stories for their own benefit, Sanders worried about children distorting things in order to protect themselves from potential repercussions from their masters. Given these concerns, the reports that children gave about their mistreatment and unhappiness are even more remarkable, and perhaps reflect the children's belief that reporting these issues would result in their being removed from their current positions.

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[69] R. Grisold, Secretary of the CFS at the Cape, 19 Feb. 1840, in *1840 Report*, p. 2.

[70] On this in another context, see E. Buettner, 'Problematic spaces, problematic races: defining "Europeans" in late colonial India', *Women's History Review*, ix (2000), 277–98, at p. 284.

[71] Rev. J. W. Sanders to Rev. A. M. Campbell, 13 Jan. 1840, Cullen Library, Wits University, AB 3153.

The commission found that, in general, the children were well-treated. This included dismissing Trubshaw's claim against his master as false: indeed, Longmore wrote that on visiting de Wet's farm in Rustenburg, the eleven juvenile emigrants present were 'amongst the most cheerful, contented, well-clothed and well-trained whom I examined, and his system towards them altogether the best regulated'.[72] This went against previous complaints against de Wet from other apprentices, who had reported that he was cruel and used excessive force in his punishment of the children.[73] Nevertheless, the governor at the Cape said that the CFS should stop sending children to the colony, because of the 'evident disposition, if not a settled determination, on the part of many persons in England to pay implicit belief to every foolish report or misrepresentation to its [the CFS's] discredit'.[74] *The Times* had written the activities of the Society off as a form of white slavery at worst or 'kidnapping' at best.[75] At the same time, the investigation into the scheme had put strain onto Brenton's health, and he died of a heart attack in April 1839. At the time of his death, he was dealing with accusations about the Society in the press, including Trubshaw's claims that he had been mistreated at the Cape.[76] Trubshaw was not able to stay out of trouble himself, however, and was transported to Australia for stealing in 1839, after the Society's dissolution.[77] Trubshaw's character, as someone who was, according to Brenton 'addicted to lying and theft', was confirmed, but the details of his subsequent transportation were not reported in the press.[78]

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[72] *1840 Report*, p. 9.

[73] See the case of Henry MacDowell, CA, 1/STB 3/32.

[74] George Napier to Lord John Russell, 24 Feb. 1840, *1840 Report*, p. 1.

[75] See *The Times*, 5 April 1839.

[76] Blackburn, *The Children's Friend Society*, pp. 64–5.

[77] See Edward Shaw's record in Tasmania here: <https://talis.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/search/detailnonmodal/ent:$002f$002fNAME_INDEXES$002f0$002fNAME_INDEXES:1433101/one> [accessed 12 Jan. 2021].

[78] *The Times*, 6 April 1839.

Conclusion

The activities of the CFS and its subsequent demise highlight the connected welfare histories of the British Empire. The colonies were approached as a space for solving the welfare needs of a constrained metropole where issues of juvenile delinquency, overcrowding and urban poverty were seen as increasingly pressing concerns. What this case shows, however, is that conceptions of welfare shifted across colonial territories, and the children's welfare in the Cape was not approached in the same way as Brenton had intended. In other words, while the Cape might have been imagined as a space for children to achieve their potential as future settlers, the reality of labour conditions at the Cape, as well as the positions in which the children found themselves, challenged this assumption. The colonial context therefore profoundly affected and shaped the metropolitan emigration scheme, to the extent that reporting on the Cape led to the Society's dissolution. As Hall and others have argued, this indicates the necessity of studying metropole and colony in the same framework: the situation and circumstances in both spaces could influence and change each other.[79] The CFS scheme illustrates how the welfare of a nation and empire could be tied to the welfare of individual children: the need to solve problems in the metropole, and to settle and provide labour to the colonies, meant that this scheme could be positioned as in the best interests of the young emigrants.

The cases referred to in this chapter of individual children's reported experiences of the CFS scheme must be read in a broader context. Although these sources are remarkable in that, in some cases, they give us a sense of children's own words, they nonetheless focus on a small but very visible group of children within the colony. There are not similar records of other child labourers – particularly indigenous or formerly enslaved labourers – on farms and in homes in the Cape. It was through the CFS emigrant children's connections to England, and through tapping into a set of ideas regarding their welfare, that they were able to have their voices heard. The outcome of the 1840 Commission of Enquiry indicates the level of agency and influence that individual children could have in this context. Through Trubshaw's reporting on the scheme, it was ultimately investigated and shut down. However, the ability of these children to shape their own destiny should not be overstated. While some wrote home, maintaining their connections with family and friends, the records suggest that very few returned to England. Moreover, even when directly asked about their experiences in the 1840 Commission of Enquiry, many apprentices' responses said little about their own understandings of their welfare. They mentioned living relatives with whom they had lost contact; others spoke about punishment, lack of sufficient food and insignificant training in a professional skill which would allow them to gain employment when they left their current positions.

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[79] Hall, 'Introduction', p. 5.

The records relating to individual children affected by the CFS scheme show that for some, their welfare was intimately tied to being ‘at home’, but what this idea of home meant varied between individuals. Some found masters that taught them useful trades, where they were provided for and treated well. Others felt displaced in a colony increasingly divided along racial lines, vulnerable and unable to communicate easily with their masters and other workers. The young apprentices expressed agency in different ways, and this also reflects the diversity of experiences that the children had once they were placed in their situations in the Cape. Working in a trade in the centre of Cape Town, like Henry and Martha Powell, was quite different to being placed on a rural farm and conducting agricultural labour. The diversity of experiences and responses to them indicates how these young people lived on a continuum between powerful and powerless, both neglected and subject to an enormous amount of care as expressed through this welfare scheme.

Given that the commissioners approached their reporting using different methods, sometimes recording children’s words verbatim, at other times collapsing the experiences of hundreds of children into a single paragraph or conclusion, we must be wary of concluding that there were monolithic experiences of the Society’s activities based on age, gender, occupation or location. Similarly, the published letters reflect a generally positive account of the scheme but represent the views of a very small minority of children sent to the Cape. The utility of this case study is in its reflection of the great diversity of responses from young people, from compliance and happiness to resistance and rebellion. It is worth keeping this in mind in studies of children’s welfare more broadly – while children might seem very similar on paper, their responses to an intervention could differ remarkably. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to trace these fragments of children’s experiences as they allow us to think beyond simple binaries of children being either victims or successes in these schemes. Each snapshot points to a complex and individual engagement with the Society’s aims.

2. ‘Their mother is a violent drunken woman who has been several times in prison’: ‘saving’ children from their families, 1850–1900

Gillian Lamb[1]

Immortalized by Dickens, enumerated by Booth and exploited by Barnardo, the Victorian pauper child was a familiar image in nineteenth-century England.[2] In 1861, seven million of England’s population of twenty million was under the age of fifteen, a proportion of young people that would remain largely unchanged for the next thirty years.[3] There were growing fears about child labour, juvenile delinquency, high infant mortality and the moral threat posed by large masses of the poor crowded into urban streets.[4] In 1850, Charles Dickens described the poor children of London as:

> the very dregs of the population of the largest city in the world – human waifs and strays of the modern Babylon; the children of poverty, and misery and crime; in very many cases labouring under physical defects, such as bad sight or hearing; almost always stunted in growth, and bearing the stamp of ugliness and suffering on their features. Generally born in dark alleys and backcourts, their playground has been the streets, where the wits of many have been sharpened at the expense of any moral they may have. With minds and bodies destitute of proper nutriment, they are caught, as it were by Parish officers, like half-wild creatures.[5]

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[1] The research for this chapter was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, grant number AH/L503885/1.

[2] For a discussion of Barnardo’s use of falsified images of poor children for fund-raising purposes see L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans, Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006), pp. 12–42.

[3] L. Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood: Child Oppression in Britain, 1860–1918* (New York, 1991), p. 2.

[4] S. Magarey, ‘The invention of juvenile delinquency in early nineteenth-century England’, *Labour History*, xxxiv (1978), 11–27; D. Garrisi, ‘The Victorian press coverage of the 1842 report on child labour’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, xv (2017), 442–78.

[5] C. Dickens, *Household Words*, xxiii (1850), 549–52.

G. Lamb, ‘“Their mother is a violent drunken woman who has been several times in prison”: “saving” children from their families, 1850–1900’, in *Children’s experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 49–72.

These descriptions of poor children caught hold of the public imagination fortified by speeches in parliament and articles in newspapers.[6] Such children, as Anna Davin has pointed out, were always visible on the streets employed in a variety of tasks lawful or otherwise and their very visibility made these 'guttersnipes' and 'arabs' threatening to society.[7]

Dickens was speaking to an active debate on juvenile delinquency, which as Harry Hendrick has demonstrated, brought into conflict eighteenth-century romantic ideals and the realities of industrial child labour. Notions of childhood were changing throughout the nineteenth century and by the middle of the period, children were increasingly regarded as innocent and malleable, in need of protection. Philanthropists were central to an emerging child welfare provision that argued that all children needed the guidance of a family environment that corresponded to middle-class ideals of domesticity.[8] The discursive power of this image of the sweet innocent child at risk from its environment spawned a philanthropic movement that aimed to 'rescue' such children from their parents and place them in institutions where they could be educated, trained for future employment and most importantly separated from the adverse influences of their home.[9]

By reframing the discussion around these removed children, this chapter challenges the dominant historiographical view that nineteenth-century institutional welfare was a negative outcome for children. It explores the diversity of children's backgrounds in conjunction with children's agency and argues first that children played a role in shaping their encounters with welfare and second that the family environment was not always best for children; sometimes the institution was preferable, even if it was not always the outcome that parents desired. Using an innovative life-course approach that combines institutional documents with genealogical research, the first part of the chapter focuses on the circumstances under which children entered institutions as an important constituent of the welfare experience. Only by considering the complete background to children's entry into care are we able to effectively critique the welfare experience. Building on this, the second part of the chapter explores children's responses to their time in the Homes to argue that official documents such as punishment registers have multiple meanings and need to be combined with other sources such as letters and life course data to enrich our understanding of the way children were shaped by – and shaped – the welfare they experienced.

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[6] A. Davin, *Growing Up Poor* (London, 1996), p. 162.

[7] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p. 162.

[8] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare, England 1872–1989* (London, 1994), pp. 21–9.

[9] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 28.

The child removal policy has been widely criticized in the scholarship in terms of both its effectiveness and the presumed pain it caused.[10] Hendrick's pioneering 1994 study of child welfare asserted what he described as the 'misery endured by these boys and girls taken from their parents, brothers and sisters, families, communities and friends' but without exploring any individual or collective experiences from the child's perspective.[11] To justify the removal of children, nineteenth-century reformers constructed discourses that invariably depicted parents as abusive and neglectful, vagrants, drunkards and prostitutes primarily interested in their children for the wages they could bring in. This portrayal was successfully challenged at the turn of the twenty-first century by Lydia Murdoch in her influential book *Imagined Orphans*. Murdoch argued that institutionalized children more typically came from desperate yet caring families afflicted by poverty.[12] This implied that separation was harmful for both parties – parents and children – and was an important development in our understanding of nineteenth-century welfare that fitted within a broader historiographical shift, begun by E. P. Thompson that sought to restore dignity to working-class lives.[13] However, it also positioned parents who were 'drunkards, prostitutes and brutal abusers' as the diametric opposite of the 'single mother who struggled to maintain contact with her child despite poverty, illness or the death of a partner' – a profile that Murdoch argued was more common in reality than the classic Victorian image of abusive and exploitative parents.[14]

This dichotomy is problematic because both presentations are not necessarily exclusive. Mothers can have suffered illness and poverty and also be prostitutes. Parents can both be drunkards and have lost a spouse. Furthermore, the focus on parents risks obscuring the children who had to live in the circumstances highlighted by Murdoch. Recent research into childhood indicates that in the present day, poverty, illness and instability can be as disruptive to a child as drunkenness and neglect.[15] How did these factors influence children in the nineteenth century? Peter Stearns argued that when it came to childhood in the past 'we know a fair amount' about children who have passed through institutional care, but despite the wealth of scholarship on institutions, there is little that examines in depth what it was like to be a recipient of institutional welfare from the child's perspective.[16] It is twenty years since Lynn Abram's pioneering work on Scottish foster-care children adopted a child-centred approach that wound together statistics and oral histories to highlight the adverse impacts of Scottish welfare policy, but few similar works have followed. Abrams' critique while influential was limited, as Catriona Macdonald pointed out, both by the need to substitute the voice of the adult for that of the child and by a lack of evidence for the nineteenth century.[17] More recently, however, Laura Mair has successfully centred the nineteenth-century child in her examination of letters between former ragged school pupils and their schoolteacher. In so doing, she not only revealed the many networks of friendship and community that were built through philanthropic endeavour, but has also enhanced our 'partial' understanding of the child's experience of welfare.[18]

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[10] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 57–61; S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia* (New York, 2010); L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998).

[11] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81.

[12] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

[13] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966).

[14] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 3.

However, there remains more to be done, particularly in the field of 'child removal' where the cultural turn has concentrated attention on discourses of child saving and emigration rather than on the social underpinnings and experiences of those saved. In critiquing institutionalization as a policy, the focus is on the act of removal not on the time leading up to it or afterwards and analyses are often constructed in ways that position family life as good and institutional life as bad. The scholarship has been understandably influenced by the emergence of twentieth-century institutional child abuse scandals. Even in scholarship that examines children's experiences of institutional life, positive accounts are often implicitly characterized as unrepresentative – overshadowed by language and analysis that emphasizes the 'quiet pain' suffered by removed children as a result of the 'loss of a mother's love' and on their 'dislocation and alienation' as adults.[19] Yet there has been limited consideration of nineteenth-century experiences. Through the work of Lydia Murdoch, Pamela Cox and Harry Hendrick, we know how nineteenth-century philanthropists and the state viewed welfare for poor and criminal children. What we do not know is how the children themselves viewed the welfare provision available to them. How did they respond to philanthropists eager to 'rescue' them from family? How did they feel about the parents and families they left behind?

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[15] In 2019, UNICEF reported that poverty damages mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development of children, creating effects that can last into adulthood. Some of these effects can be mitigated by 'a nurturing, attentive and emotionally-supportive mother', E. Young, 'The psychological impacts of poverty, digested' <https://digest.bps.org.uk/2019/12/03/the-psychological-impacts-of-poverty-digested> [accessed 11 Aug. 2020]; M. F. Bell, D. M. Bayliss and R. Glauert, 'Developmental vulnerabilities in children of chronically ill parents', *Journal of Epidemiology and Health*, lxxiii (2019), 393–400. Other recent studies suggest that long periods of poverty have a positive relationship with delinquency. See: G. R. Jarjoura, R. A. Triplett and G. P. Brinker, 'Growing up poor: examining the link between persistent childhood poverty and delinquency', *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, xviii (2002), 159–87.

[16] P. N. Stearns, 'Challenges in the history of childhood', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, i (2008), 35–42, at p. 38.

[17] Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; L. Abrams, 'Families of the imagination: myths of Scottish family life in Scottish child welfare policy', *Scottish Tradition* (2007), 27, 42–59, at p. 44; C. M. Macdonald, 'Abrams, The Orphan Country', *Scottish Historical Review*, lxxix (2000), 143, at p. 143.

[18] L. Mair, '"Give my love": community and companionship among former ragged school scholars', *Family & Community History*, xxi (2018), 166–79.

To answer these questions, this chapter explores the records of one hundred individuals (fifty girls and fifty boys) from two Surrey institutions in the second half of the nineteenth century. Children were admitted from across England. One-third of those in the Homes came from rural locations, forty-five per cent from London and the remainder from other English cities and towns. The period was one of increased state and philanthropic intervention in the welfare of Britain's poor children. The Reformatory Act of 1854 established residential reformatory schools for young delinquents and by 1872, of an estimated 9,363 criminal children in England, around 5,575 were in such institutions. This was about a third as large as the destitute child population of workhouses, demonstrating just how significant this category of children was.[20] A broadly similar number (10,185) were part of what social reformer Mary Carpenter described as the 'perishing classes', children who had not yet committed a crime but might do so if left unaided.[21] These children were taken into industrial schools, established in the Act of 1857, where, according to historian Marianne Moore, it was hoped that love and training would allow them to earn an honest living in what she described as 'one of the most energetic child protection movements in modern England'.[22] Both the schools studied in this chapter, the Royal Philanthropic School (RPS) for boys and the Princess Mary Village Homes (PMVH) for girls, were important within their respective movements. The reformatory RPS admitted children from across England and was regarded as the most prominent in its field, accounting for almost ten per cent of the boys in reformatory schools in England and Wales in 1860, while the PMVH, established in 1870 as an industrial school for daughters of criminals, similarly accommodated around ten per cent of England's much smaller population of institutionalized girls.[23] Together, these two categories of children represented a substantial proportion of nineteenth-century child welfare recipients, yet they are relatively underexplored in the history of child welfare, which has tended to focus on higher-profile organizations such as Barnardo's and the Waifs and Strays where parents played a more instrumental role in admission, normally seeking temporary care for their children after a family crisis.[24] Including these schools in an analysis of welfare providers therefore significantly expands our understanding of nineteenth-century experiences of welfare.

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[19] E. Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge, 2014), begins her analysis with the positive experience of Steve Oldfield, but focuses throughout her book on the rigorous workloads imposed on some migrant children, lack of emotional care within institutions and severance of family relationships experienced by children who emigrated primarily in the 20th century. For quotes see pp. 240–1, 243.

[20] *Fourth Report of the Inspector Appointed to Visit the Certified Reformatory Schools of Great Britain* (Parl. Papers 1861).

[21] *Sixteenth Report of the Inspector Appointed to Visit the Certified Reformatory Schools of Great Britain* (Parl. Papers 1872).

'I determined to change my name and deny all knowledge of living relations': children's choices and their consequences[25]

In order to evaluate children's encounters with institutional welfare, it is essential to consider the environment and circumstances that led to their institutionalization. Only by contextualizing children's lives before their removal can we truly understand the experience of separation in all its permutations. The revisionist historiography of institutional welfare positions parents and children as victims of philanthropic enthusiasm. Yet not all children resisted entry to institutional care; some actively sought it, while others still contributed to their admission through their own behaviour. Furthermore, not all families conformed either to the ideal of Victorian domestic life represented by Ruskin's model of the 'place of peace and shelter' or to modern ideals of safety and security within the family structure.[26]

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[22] M. Moore, 'Social control or protection of the child? The debates on the Industrial School Acts, 1857–1894', *Journal of Family History*, xxxiii (2008), 359–87, at pp. 362, 364–5.

[23] *Return of Number of Reformatory and Industrial Schools Certified and Sanctioned by Secretary of State* (Parl. Papers 1860). Calculated based on reported number of girls in institutional care in British Parliamentary Papers. *Return of Number of Reformatory and Industrial Schools Certified and Sanctioned by Secretary of State* (Parl. Papers 1880).

[24] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 362.

[25] Surrey History Centre (SHC), 2271/10/13, Handwritten letter from George Wallace.

Firstly, it is important to recognize that some children were eager to leave the family home despite their parents' desire to retain custody of them. One such case was that of the Navin sisters, Margaret (aged seven) and Julia (aged four), whose mother Mary Ann often placed them on the streets to beg on her behalf. On her admission to prison in 1870, Mary Ann, a frequent thief with a string of aliases, gave the girls into the care of PMVH.[27] On her release seven months later, Mary Ann 'violently removed' both girls from the Home and took the children back to her lodgings in London's 'Devil's Acre' where as many as 120 people lived in a single lodging and disease and poverty were rife.[28] Shortly afterwards, smallpox struck the family and the girls' new-born infant sister Jane died. Ravaged by illness and with Julia a 'pitiable object', Margaret left her mother's home and ran the two streets to the PMVH's Mission House. Reportedly 'taking hold of the hand' of one of the ladies, she asked if she and Julia could be returned that night to the PMVH and never leave. The girls were admitted to the Home under the Industrial Schools Act 1866, probably due to the report of them begging, although Margaret's voluntary return to seek help may have also supported allegations of neglect. Subsequent attempts by Mary Ann to remove them were unsuccessful.[29]

While it is tempting to dismiss this account as a romanticized story of child 'rescue', similar to those critiqued by Swain and others as propaganda, the details were not published but were reconstructed from the information contained in the private admissions register for the Home, supplemented by genealogical tracing and analysis of criminal registers.[30] This demonstrates the advantage of the methodological approach adopted for this chapter. Centring the perspective of the child forces us to recognize that, in some circumstances and for some children, institutional welfare was preferable to family life. That the interests of the child might come into conflict with the desires of their parent is something that is largely unrecognized in discussions of child welfare.

Margaret's story also challenges traditional presentations of institutional children as 'passive objects' and sharpens our understanding of agency by demonstrating that children could not only willingly conform to adult agendas when it suited them to do so, but also wield significant strategic power that influenced their futures.[31] In returning to the Mission to seek help, Margaret would have understood the probable outcome of her actions. Mary Ann clearly wanted her children with her and had only given them up to the care of the Home temporarily. The word 'violently' used to describe the children's removal could imply either that the managers resisted Mary Ann's attempts to reclaim her children or that the children themselves resisted removal – unfortunately, we cannot tell. Once reclaimed, the girls were lodging barely two streets away from the Mission, yet it was a definitive action by seven-year-old Margaret, perhaps scared by her younger sister's death and in fear for her own life and that of her remaining sister, that resulted in the girls' readmission. Margaret had spent six months in the Home the preceding year, had been back with her mother only briefly and had still chosen institutional life over the alternative with her mother. Faced with contradictory adult demands, she made her own assessment of the best means to secure her welfare.

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[26] J. Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Three Lectures* (London, 1910), p. 108.

[27] SHC, 2591/3/1, Margaret Navin; England & Wales, Crime, Prisons and Punishment: HO140/15 <https://findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 10 March 2019].

[28] 'The Devil's Acre' <http://www.choleraandthethames.co.uk/cholera-in-london/cholera-in-westminster/the-devils-arce/> [accessed 30 July 2020].

[29] SHC, 2591/3/1, Margaret Navin.

[30] Swain and Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, pp. 16–40.

This example supports the assertion that the familial background of the children matters in our evaluation of welfare experiences. Poverty was often intermingled with other factors such as criminality, the loss or desertion of a parent, neglect and abuse. In such circumstances, while children may not have chosen welfare as Margaret did, the institutional environment may still have been preferable to the domestic one. As Murdoch has argued, abuse was rarely recorded, but neglect and abandonment were far more common.[32] Around forty-five per cent of the PMVH girls had criminal mothers. This, of course, reflects the profile of the Home, which targeted such families, but it is nonetheless worth emphasizing given the historiographical focus on the loving struggling single mother of an institutionalized child. There were many iterations of mothers and families. Catherine Hall's parents were both in prison. Her mother, Ellen, was first convicted at the age of sixteen for theft and had four further convictions for housebreaking and stealing together with a man called William James.[33] After serving nine months of her second twelve-month sentence, she was released to give birth to Catherine. Shortly afterwards, together with James, she broke into yet another house, was caught and convicted and one-year-old Catherine removed to the PMVH to prevent her entering prison with her mother.[34] Similarly, thirteen-month-old Julia Jenkins was admitted from Westminster prison, where her mother, a habitual criminal with nine aliases, was serving one of her many jail terms for larceny. Another Catherine, Catherine Coleman, also had parents who were both convicts. Her father was serving fourteen years in prison and her mother on her fourth conviction took up an offer of emigration sponsored by a society for female prisoners, failing to disclose to them that she was leaving behind a child in order to gain her ticket. According to the admissions register, eight-year-old Catherine was reportedly left to live with ‘some people named Hart’ from whom she ran away frequently, living on the streets. Eventually an intoxicated Mrs Hart, who was in fact Catherine’s maternal aunt, and who ‘wished to get rid of her’ brought her to the PMVH.[35] For these girls, the PMVH offered the only alternative to life on the streets or in prison.

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[31] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates* (Bristol, 2003), p. 253.

[32] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 69–70.

[33] Old Bailey records <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?div=t18670610-546> [accessed 3 July 2020].

Yet admission to a residential institution was not their choice and like most of the girls admitted to the PMVH, they were there because of their parents’ criminal activity, not their own. Victorian justice was gendered and tended to focus on the risks posed by female sexuality and disorder and there were relatively few criminal convictions among the cohort studied for this chapter.[36] However, there were exceptions. The group studied contained three girls who were clearly of concern to the authorities. These were eleven-year-old beggar Eliza Goulden, and ‘uncontrollable’ twelve-year-old Flora Green, both of whom subsequently stole from their mistresses, and thirteen-year-old Emma Brady who ‘ran wild’ in bad company and repeatedly robbed her respectable-but-deaf seamstress mother. All these girls were admitted to the PMVH in the hope that its ‘discipline and confinement’ would encourage them to mend their ways.[37] Their actions, which disrupted Victorian norms of female behaviour, contributed to their admission.

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[34] SHC, 2591/3/1, Catherine Hall; Millbank Prison Registers: Female Prisoners, HO24/14; Crime & Punishment, CRIM9/16.

[35] SHC, 2591/3/1, Catherine Coleman.

[36] P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560–1640* (New York, 1996); B. S. Godfrey, S. Farrall and S. Karstedt, ‘Explaining gendered sentencing patterns for violent men and women in the late Victorian and Edwardian period’, *The British Journal of Criminology*, xlv (2005), 696–720; H. Shore, ‘The trouble with boys: gender and the “invention” of the juvenile offender in the early nineteenth century’, in *Gender and Crime in Modern Europe*, ed. M. Arnot and C. Usborne (New York, 1999), pp. 75–92.

[37] SHC, 2591/3/1, Eliza Goulden, Flora Jane Green, Emma Brady.

Delinquent children, as Heather Shore has demonstrated, immediately present as more agentic than the traditional pauper child.[38] Yet, while such children were central to discourses on crime in the Victorian period, analysis of their agency was still framed and structured within a broader narrative that foregrounded their parents. Reformers believed that criminal children were nurtured into crime. Victorian social commentator James Greenwood argued that juvenile offenders were 'thieves from infancy. Their parents are thieves in most cases; in others, the children are orphans, or have been forsaken by their parents'.[39] Central to this argument was a fundamental association between the juvenile criminal and the criminality or immorality of their families that simultaneously rendered the child corruptible yet innocent and therefore passive. Yet, surprisingly few of the boys studied for this chapter fitted this stereotype. Genealogical tracing reveals no evident birth order pattern among offenders. Over two-thirds came from families where the father earned a reasonable wage, there were other siblings in employment and they were in employment themselves. One such boy was sixteen-year-old George Wheeler who was admitted in 1892. His father earned thirty shillings per week as a bookbinder, his elder brother was in the army and he himself had had several previous jobs as an errand boy in a fishmonger, bootmaker, picture gallery and a printers in London. He had lost his previous jobs for theft and was eventually convicted of stealing two diamond rings worth £16.[40] Another boy from a similarly respectable family, George Heywood (aged twelve), was convicted twenty years earlier in Derby of a less serious first offence of stealing pigeons but was described on admission as a 'known associate of thieves'.[41] George, the son of an iron moulder, had been employed driving a steam hammer at a forge at the time of his admission and his two older brothers Henry and Alfred were also gainfully employed in iron manufacturing.[42] The examples of the two Georges demonstrate the value of tracing children's backgrounds. In an 1853 speech in support of the Reformatory Schools Bill, evangelical reforming MP Charles Adderley described criminal children as 'orphans in body and mind' driven to commit crimes by an absence of family or moral guidance.[43] Yet, the genealogical analysis reveals that both Georges came from families who were relatively poor but respectable, with established familial networks of employed or married non-criminal siblings and grandparents nearby. According to the records, they were relatively typical of the type of boy to be found within the RPS. Just over half of the boys from the cohort came from families where the father was in skilled employment such as blacksmithing, tailoring and boot-making. A further eleven per cent had fathers in manufacturing occupations such as iron moulding. Even when the father was not in employment, was dead or absent, more than seventy per cent of the boys had older siblings who were in employment. If the RPS boys were not driven to criminality through desperation and hunger, as the historiography suggests, there must have been more specific factors.[44] What led this particular child to behave differently to his or her siblings, many of whom would have been subject to the same influences?

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[38] Shore in *Artful Dodgers* uses detailed life studies to conclude that while poverty played a role in some youth crime, many juvenile offenders often gave up criminality as they matured. See: H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Woodbridge, 2002).

[39] J. Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London* (1869), ch. viii, p. 130.

[40] SHC, 2271/10/20, George Wheeler; Census 1891: RG12/97/79/2 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk> [accessed 20 June 2020].

[41] SHC, 2271/10/16, George Heywood.

[42] Census 1871: RG10/3563/43/9.

Recognizing the individuality of the child within the family unit encourages broader considerations of potential causes of his or her behaviour. While modern analysis has considered the contributory factors to youth offending in some detail from the perspective of the child, most studies of Victorian juvenile delinquency have focused on either the role played by structural factors or the socially and culturally constructed nature of youth misbehaviour.[45] The response of the child to changing family circumstances is neglected. Yet viewing juvenile delinquency through a framework of family relationships can provide possible alternative explanations for children's criminality. One of the most fundamental crises in family life was the death or desertion of a parent. Analysis of the children in the RPS and the PMVH reveals high rates of parental loss. Across the period 1850–1900, fifty per cent had lost a parent to death at some point and a further twenty-eight per cent had been deserted by one or more parents. This is significantly higher than Jane Humphries' estimates of ten to twenty per cent of all fourteen-year-old nineteenth-century children having lost at least one parent to death and Zhao's modelling that indicated twenty-five per cent of children born in 1851–5 had lost at least one parent by age fifteen.[46] It is, of course, unsurprising that children who have lost a parent would be more likely to encounter welfare. Murdoch found similar rates of paternal loss in her study of institutionalized children as did Emma Griffin in her recent book on Victorian society and economics.[47] Jane Humphries identified in her study of childhood and child labour that the loss of one or both parents jeopardized all family life and had a significant impact on a child's life chances.[48] The loss of a father was both a 'major economic and emotional blow' and the disappearance of a mother was likely to lead to a family break-up.[49] Yet death or desertion was not the only form of absence a child could experience. Thirty-one per cent of children in the cohort also had a parent who was or had been in prison. For the child of a frequently imprisoned parent, the impact of the uncertainty and dashed hopes caused by repeated jail-time could have as profound an emotional impact as death. Modern studies have shown that parental imprisonment is a 'strong risk factor' for adverse life outcomes for children and that children are even more affected if their mother is imprisoned.[50] Similar studies are lacking for the nineteenth century that allow us to historicize children's emotions regarding the loss or desertion of a parent; however, scholarship by Julie-Marie Strange and Ellen Ross has demonstrated the significance of parental care in nineteenth-century working-class children's lives, the absence of which could have had emotional consequences.[51]

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[43] 'Industrial school for criminal children', *Morning Chronicle*, 28 Jan. 1853, British Library, MF0284.

[44] Susan Magarey highlighted the role played by poverty, overcrowding and unemployment in youth crime. See Magarey, 'The invention of juvenile delinquency', pp. 13–15; Shore discusses a variety of potential factors ranging from poverty and neglect to family instability and drunkenness. See: H. Shore, 'Home play and street life: causes of and explanations for juvenile crime in the early nineteenth century', in *Childhood in Question*, ed. A. Fletcher and S. Hussey (Manchester, 1999), pp. 96–114.

[45] L. J. Siegel and B. C. Welsh, *Juvenile Delinquency: Theory, Practice and Law* (Boston, 2018); H. Shore, 'Inventing and re-inventing the juvenile delinquent in British history', *Memoria y Civilización*, xiv (2011), 105–32.

The economic effect of parental loss has in contrast been a focus of much of the analysis of children's entry into institutions and poverty unquestionably played a crucial role in many admissions.[52] However, an examination of bereaved children's backgrounds reveals that in many cases in the cohort, the surviving parent had remarried. Just over a quarter – just as many fathers as mothers – had a new partner by the time of their child's entry to the Homes. This may have alleviated some of the economic pressures on families, but there is some evidence that it did not necessarily lessen the emotional impact of such a significant change in family life. The influence of family reconstitution on institutional children is absent from the literature, yet in over seventy per cent of the cases where a parent had remarried, the children in the step-relationship displayed signs of unhappiness that contributed to their admission. In Victorian public discourse, step-parents, although a common occurrence, were often blamed for family breakdown or delinquency.[53] Prominent campaigner Lord Shaftesbury argued that 'very many' criminal children were 'driven from home and turned into the street by the ferocity of their step-parents', adding that there was 'no cause of vice, misery or suffering more common than the domineering temper of step-mothers who will not allow their step-children to remain in the same house with them'.[54] These discourses drew on long-established tropes of wicked step-parents that were given new strength in the period by the increasing sacralization of the family and the parental role.[55] Historians have increasingly questioned these stereotypes by pointing first to the widespread occurrence of Victorian remarriage and, second, to the many historical examples of happy or successful step-families.[56] Yet, there are nonetheless indications within the records of the RPS and the PMVH that some families found their new step-relationships problematic or even abusive. One parent who unquestionably fulfilled the stereotype of the wicked step-father was John Colwell, step-father of Sarah Rivett and her sister Elizabeth, who married the girls' mother when the girls were aged three and four, respectively. In 1883, Colwell confessed to indecently assaulting and causing actual bodily harm to his eldest step-daughter, thirteen-year-old Elizabeth, on multiple occasions and was sentenced to eight months in prison.[57] Elizabeth was sent to a home for girls and twelve-year-old Sarah was admitted to the PMVH to rescue her from the further 'demoralizing and depraving influence' of her step-father. She remained there until she was seventeen and safely of an age when she no longer needed to remain under parental control.[58] For the Rivett girls, as for the Navin sisters, the family environment was less safe than the alternative of the institution.

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[46] Z. Zhao, 'The demographic transition in Victorian England and changes in English kinship networks', *Continuity and Change*, xi (1996), 243–72, at p. 257.

[47] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 72–9; E. Griffin, *Breadwinner* (Yale, 2020), pp. 136–42.

[48] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 172, 63.

[49] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, p. 68.

[50] J. Murray and D. P. Farrington, 'The effects of parental imprisonment on children', *Crime and Justice*, xxxvii (2008), 133–206, at p. 133.

[51] J.-M. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class 1865–1914* (Cambridge, 2015); E. Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (New York, 2011).

[52] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

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[53] For a discussion on wicked step-parents see: P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London, 1971), pp. 114–55; L. Wilson, *A History of Stepfamilies in Early America* (Chapel Hill, 2014), pp. 1–8, 45–57.

[54] 'Criminal and destitute children', *The Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser*, 30 July 1853.

[55] C. Nelson, *Family Ties in Victorian England* (Westport, 2007), p. 7.

[56] Laslett discusses the propensity to remarry in ch. 5 of his book, *The World We Have Lost*, p. 113; Wilson, *A History of Stepfamilies*.

[57] Old Bailey records <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/images.jsp?doc=188309100059> [accessed 20 July 2020]; Ancestry.com, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1932: p72/jsg/043.

The Rivetts' case, however, was one of only two cases of obvious abuse in the PMVH register. Far more common across both institutions were neglectful, fractured or difficult step-relationships. Alice Sophia Wells was the illegitimate child of eighteen-year-old servant Amelia.[59] Alice was reportedly 'terribly neglected' after her mother married coachman Benjamin Knight and was 'a constant subject of dispute between the parents, the step-father having a thorough dislike for the child'. She was admitted to the PMVH and remained there for six years, finally leaving for a position in service in 1883 at the age of fifteen.[60] While she was in the Home her mother gave birth to two more children, Caroline and Amelia Ann, with her husband Benjamin.[61] Interestingly, while Alice's step-father is blamed in the records for Alice's removal from the family home, background analysis reveals that almost ten years later, following her step-father's death and her mother's subsequent remarriage to William Johnson, Alice's seven-year-old half-sister Amelia Ann was also sent away from the family home to live with her uncle Thomas, an engineer's fireman.[62] Perhaps it was Alice's mother therefore that struggled to integrate her children from a former partner into a new relationship and not her step-father. As Claudia Nelson has pointed out, inadequate parental–child bonds were more acceptable to Victorian society when the parent that failed to conform to nurturing norms was a step-parent rather than a birth relative.[63] Irrespective of the cause, what the records and research cannot explain is why on the second occasion that Amelia sent a child away, it was to a family member rather than to an institution. Did her new husband intercede or was it that her brother Thomas, by this time in a good job, but in a childless marriage, offered on this occasion to take in Amelia's child? Or did Amelia's previous experience of having placed Alice in an institution deter her from doing so with a second child? It is worth noting here that at any point during Alice's six years in the PMVH her mother could have chosen to bring her back home; other mothers in similar circumstances did. That she did not speaks of the boundaries of her affection and obligation towards Alice as well as of a deliberate choice to place her child in institutional care rather than the familial alternative.

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[58] SHC, 2591/3/1, Sarah Rivett.

[59] Ancestry.com, Births, Marriages, Deaths: 1A/308.

[60] SHC, 2591/3/1, Alice Wells.

[61] Census 1881: RG11/153/35/8; Church of England Births and Baptisms: p89/ctc/041.

[62] Census 1891: RG12/137/91/41.

[63] Nelson, *Family Ties*, p. 147.

Just as step-parents rejected their step-children so did step-children reject their new parents. Fifteen-year-old William Stanford from rural Sussex, on admission to the RPS, refused to admit that his twenty-four-year-old step-father even existed. Instead, he pretended that his father, who had died five years previously, was still alive and was a station master when it was his step-father who really worked on the railway, but only as a labourer.[64] Both the resurrection of his father and his father's occupational elevation clearly demonstrated William's resentment towards the man by whom his mother had become pregnant a scarce five months after his father's death. Despite therefore generally improving a family's economic situation, remarriage could result in a disruption to family life that provided impetus to a child's encounter with welfare, either at the instigation of the step-parents or through the agency of the child.

Children appear to have been aware of the ways in which they could use the welfare system to direct their futures. This chapter began with the example of the Navin sisters who begged to leave their family to return to the Home. They were not an isolated instance. Every time George Wallace ran away from his 'cruel stepmother' and his father, he was found by his father and returned home. Eventually, when caught in Derbyshire stealing a shirt on one such adventure, he gave a false name and claimed to have no relatives, thus ensuring not only his escape from his home life, but also his admission to reformatory school. He remained in the Home for four years and only admitted the truth of his background in a letter to the RPS over twenty years later.[65] George's actions have parallels with those of fifteen-year-old Frederick Whiffen who was discovered by a police constable sleeping rough in a market van in Holloway, North London. Frederick refused to give any account of his actions other than to claim that his parents were dead and, like George, he gave a false name on entry. This ensured his institutionalization. It was only some months later that the RPS staff discovered his true background. Frederick was illegitimate and had been placed by his mother Charlotte as a baby in the care of a Mrs Hart who had brought him up until the age of eleven when his mother's second cousin (and possibly his father), a Mr Cole, arrived, removed Frederick and placed him in the home of Frederick's maternal aunt some miles away in rural Kent as an apprentice brewer to her husband.[66] For Frederick, who had been unaware that Mrs Hart was not his real mother, it was clearly a blow. He spent the next two years being so 'tiresome' that Mr Cole then took him to London to be apprenticed as a bootmaker – from which post he promptly ran away back to Mrs Hart. The now widowed Mrs Hart refused to return Frederick to Mr Cole, who 'annoyed with her abuse' gave up his efforts.[67] However, after two years Mrs Hart moved to Reading, leaving Frederick behind and now aged fifteen Frederick was forced to live on the streets, scraping a living doing 'chance jobs' and spending the nights in market vans. On his arrest, Frederick could have chosen to reveal the existence of the numerous relatives he had recently discovered but instead pretended to be an orphan, thus, like the Navin sisters, choosing the alternative of institutional care. Perhaps having suffered what was in effect a twin abandonment by two mothers – his birth mother and Mrs Hart – he felt himself to be an orphan in truth. Certainly, his maternal grandmother in her letter to the RPS recognized that Frederick had been 'buffeted about a great deal'.[68] Frederick's return to Mrs Hart seems to indicate that his childhood as a foster child was a happy one and certainly preferable to him than the two good apprenticeship opportunities offered by his new-found relatives.

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[64] SHC, 2271/10/20, William Stanford; Ancestry.com, Railway records: RAIL414/775.

[65] SHC, 2271/10/17, George Wallace handwritten letter, Texas 1890.

[66] This was a different Mrs Hart to that involved in the case of Catherine Coleman.

The example of Frederick and the other children undermines any narrative that presents such children as passive victims of philanthropic welfare. Children existed both within and separate to the family and they understood the power they wielded as children with a right to protection in an increasingly interventionist society. It is difficult to conceive that the children would not have known what might happen to them if they concealed their origins, especially given the widespread discourses on philanthropic intervention and the overcrowded and cramped living conditions of the working classes. Historians have successfully demonstrated the ways in which poor parents used nineteenth-century welfare structures for their own benefit and in so doing enhanced our understanding of how the working poor understood their rights and status as citizens.[69] Yet what this analysis reveals is that children too made use of the systems of philanthropy and the state to suit their own ends and importantly that their interests did not necessarily coincide with those of their family. Family life was sometimes less appealing than the alternative of institutional welfare.

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[67] SHC, 2271/10/19, George Carver; England & Wales, Crime, Prisons and Punishment: HO140/82/24.

[68] SHC, 2271/10/19, George Carver.

[69] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 106–19.

'I shall always look on the time I spent at Waterlands as being the turning point of my life': the importance of relationships in intervention[70]

Central to children's encounters with welfare were people – both those they left behind and those that they met inside the institution. Children created new relationships with staff inside the Homes that had long-lasting effects and the character of the institution was of crucial importance in this process. Like family welfare, institutional welfare varied considerably depending on provider. Too often Barnardo's and the Poor Law institutions are regarded as representative of charitable approaches to child welfare overall.[71] Yet, as Seth Koven has demonstrated, Victorian philanthropy was widespread and involved people of both genders, from all social classes with a complex variety of motivations and impulses.[72] Nineteenth-century welfare was a patchwork of often partially state funded but locally embedded provision that took on the character of those who founded and operated the institutions and similar policies, such as emigration, could be delivered very differently. This diversity needs to be recognized in order to effectively evaluate children's experiences.

Both the RPS and the PMVH had a strong religious ethos and a shared belief in both the efficacy of the family-based system and the principle that institutionalized children should be met with kindness as well as structure.[73] The RPS's first warden following its institution as a farm school believed that children had to voluntarily engage in their own reform for it to be effective, arguing that the warden's role was to be 'the parent influencing by affection, not the officer, governing by discipline; to make the Asylum, not a prison for punishment but a school for education'.[74] Susannah Meredith, the founder of the PMVH, adopted a similar approach. Meredith was the widowed daughter of the governor of Cork County gaol, an experienced prison missionary and an evangelical Christian. According to her biography, she felt genuine compassion for those she helped and a great love for young people and established her institution with the aim of creating a 'intimate, tender and highly moral family ethos' to replace the adverse influences of the children's previous environment.[75]

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[70] SHC, 2271/10/17, George Wallace, handwritten letter, Texas 1890.

[71] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 80–2; J. Parr, *Labouring Children* (Toronto, 1994).

[72] S. Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, 2004), p. 4.

[73] S. Turner, *Mettray: Report on the System and Arrangements of "La Colonie Agricole," at Mettray* (London, 1846); M. Vine, *In Loco Parentis*, pp. 9, 15, 38; S. Meredith, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2018).

[74] Turner, *Mettray*, p. 9.

[75] *ODNB*, S. Meredith.

Both Homes delivered religious and moral instruction that aimed to both reform children in the present and support them in the future.

Crucial to this process of reformation were the relationships that were created and maintained with the children. In their book examining the divergent life outcomes for a group of delinquent boys born in the 1930s and tracked into old age, John H. Laub and Robert J. Sampson identified the importance of connectivity and social bonding throughout life. In particular, they argued that individuals who lacked nurturing relationships that provided informal social control through expectation and responsibility were more likely both to reoffend as adults and to achieve poor life outcomes.[76] Both the RPS and the PMVH were characterized by a stability in leadership and principal staff that seems to have been significant for many of the children in enabling them to form sustainable relationships. Within the PMVH, most house mothers stayed for around eight to ten years and the leaders of the school, Mrs Meredith and her sister Miss Lloyd, remained unchanged throughout the entirety of the period meaning that most children experienced a stability of care. Similarly, between 1857 and 1918, the RPS had only three principal wardens, the Reverend Charles Walters (1857–81), the Reverend Arthur Jackson (1882–7) and the Reverend Marshall George Vine (1887–1918). Throughout the entire second half of the century, the school was served by a single secretary, John Trevarthen, himself a certified schoolteacher, who was regarded as instrumental in the development of the school. Nor did the RPS experience much turnover in housemasters. As Trevarthen pointed out to the 1882 Commission of Inquiry into Reformatory Schools, at that time their newest master had been in the school for nineteen years and the remainder had been there since almost the farm school's inception.[77] Given the importance attached by Laub and Sampson to social connectivity throughout life, recognizing this factor in any analysis of children's welfare experiences is important. For some children, such as Catherine Hall, removed from her imprisoned mother shortly after birth, the institution was the only source of human relationship that she had; for others it provided stability and security after a life of neglect.

As Claudia Soares has also found in her chapter in this volume, these relationships proved to be important throughout the children's lives and can be glimpsed through their correspondence and official records of visits and donations. Letters provide an important insight into children's thoughts and experiences of their encounters with welfare. There are only a few letters from the girls who passed through the PMVH, but there is an extensive body of boys' correspondence both published and unpublished, as well as other records of communication. Institutional letters were often printed in annual reports and their expressions of gratitude or affection have been regarded sceptically by historians, who believe they were edited or falsified for promotional purposes.[78] However, by tracing the lives of the children who passed through the RPS and the PMVH, it has been possible in many cases to match the published letters (identified only by initials) to real children and often to verify circumstances recorded in the letters through other sources including the unpublished originals. This provides credibility to many of the public letters, as does recent work by Laura Mair. Mair examined unpublished letters from ragged school pupils and found similar themes to those that are evident in institutional published letters such as requests to send love, evidence of network building and fears of being forgotten by staff.[79] Lending further weight to assumptions of authenticity are the wide range of perspectives about children's adult lives that are published, many of them negative or critical. Some of the letters talk about children who have been reconvicted or suffered accidents or death or poverty; if these letters were selected or carefully edited, then they were a strange choice. Mair also found that institutional staff formed important and long-lasting relationships with the children in their care and this was certainly the case with the PMVH and the RPS – over half of the boys and girls who passed through the Homes in this period kept in touch with the Homes through letters and/or visits and expressed considerable affection towards individual staff members.[80] The girls were on average thirteen years old when they left the school, while the boys were on average eighteen. Many of the letters from children were sent within five years of their departure when their memories were still fresh, yet there is also evidence that children kept in touch for ten or twenty years after leaving, occasionally longer.

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[76] J. H. Laub and R. J. Sampson, *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 275–93.

[77] *Commission into Reformatory and Industrial Schools*, p. 144.

Not all children appear to have valued the relationships they established or the welfare experience overall. As Laub and Sampson acknowledged, relationships operate in conjunction with human agency. Individuals make a 'situated choice' that depends on structural constraints, intercontingencies and peer influences.[81] This was equally true for the children in the institutions. Although within the RPS all the children had contributed through their actions to their encounter with welfare, that did not mean that they all accepted their institutionalization or that they nurtured their relationships with the institutions. The records of both the PMVH and the RPS are far from complete and the PMVH lacks the detailed follow-up records that characterize the RPS. However, one way to evaluate the unhappiness of those who did not keep in touch with the home is through analysis of the punishment register, which reveals both infractions and instances of running away. There are few records of girls absconding from the PMVH, but many of boys running away. Staff and government inspectors monitored the annual numbers of those absconding as a key measure of the success of reform. The RPS had no walls around its grounds and a boy was 'put to his honour' not to breach boundaries such as streams or hedges.[82] A child's decision to run away resulted in a loss of good conduct marks, which adversely impacted the house within the school to which they were attached. Yet, of the 250 boys within the Home, on average across the period ten boys a year ran away, some repeatedly. If children were recovered, they were returned to the school, but sometimes their efforts were successful and they were never found. Sometimes boys left in groups. In the worst year, 1861, around sixty boys absconded, although in subsequent years the rate fell to less than two or three.[83] Occasionally, there was an obvious trigger – as was the case for Timothy Burns who absconded after quarrelling with fellow pupils – but more often there is little to explain their departure.[84] Through exercising this power to leave the Home, however, children were rejecting welfare and taking control of their own futures, demonstrating, as historical geographers of childhood have argued, the importance of mobility in impacting children's ability to shape both their present and their futures.[85]

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[78] Swain and Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, p. 161; G. Wagner, *Children of the Empire* (London, 1982), p. 32.

[79] Mair, 'Give my love', pp. 172–5.

[80] Mair, 'Give my love', p. 176.

[81] Laub and Sampson, *Shared Beginnings*, p. 282.

Yet punishment records are complex and hold multiple meanings. The tendency of managers to highlight episodes of defiance and punishment in the admissions records naturally draws the eye and gives an impression of children's widespread resistance to and unhappiness with their welfare experience. This tallies with the dominant historiographical view that institutions were unhappy, emotionally cold places.[86] However, inverting the analysis of recorded punishments to take note of records or periods of time when children were not punished reveals a much larger mass of children who complied with or potentially even felt attached to institutional life. Letters from children in later life speak fondly of time spent walking in the woods, playing games and participating in the band or military drill.[87] Furthermore, many of the punishments were for laziness, untidiness or impertinence – all typical categories of misbehaviour that could equally be experienced in a public school or a domestic environment.[88] Some children were frequently punished, others not at all. Of those who were punished, Henry Hopwood was to the bottom of the scale, punished on five occasions in four years, most often for smoking, while Sidney Pearce was towards the higher end, punished fourteen times in the same period, sometimes for impertinence and lying but most often for 'rambling'.[89] Children challenged the spatial boundaries within the Home, demonstrating the degree of freedom open to them. The punishment registers for the RPS show that boys stole out to the railway bank to look for birds' nests, went to the brook or rambled in the meadows near the Home without permission.[90] Interestingly, these offences were typically punished less severely than offences of character such as lying, disobedience or impertinence. This could indicate that, while rule breaking had to be punished, staff regarded such stereotypical adolescent masculine activities as part of the expected range of behaviour. Michael Leyshon has described such episodes of mobility among young people as driven by 'marginalising effects of adult regulation and/or surveillance' and part of a process of identity creation through 'small acts of resistance'.[91]

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[82] T. Ploszajska, 'Moral landscapes and manipulated spaces: gender, class and space in Victorian reformatory schools', *Journal of Historical Geography*, xx (1994), 413–29, at p. 418.

[83] *Inspector of Reformatory Schools of Great Britain, Fifth Report*, p. 51.

[84] SHC, 2271/10/9, Timothy Burns.

[85] L. Holt and L. Costello, 'Beyond otherness: exploring diverse spatialities and mobilities of childhood and youth populations', *Population, Space and Place*, xvii (2011), 299–303, at p. 301.

It is difficult to read running away as anything other than a demonstration of unhappiness, but unhappiness could be transitory and perspectives changed over time. It would be wrong to regard it as delivering a holistic verdict on institutional welfare. As Rebecca Swartz argues in her chapter, children's agency can be expressed in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways. William Page who ran away once in 1852 and twice in 1853 – the third time successfully – applied in 1855, aged seventeen, for readmission to the RPS.[92] Several of the boys who ran away later corresponded with and visited the school as adults. This indicated a significance to the children's relationship with the home that problematizes the use of desertions or punishments as a proxy for the long-term effect of welfare in shaping children's lives. One such correspondent was George Martin. Having run away twice from the RPS within a month after being punished for a separate offence, fifteen-year-old George was placed out with a shoemaker, promptly ran away and once again committed larceny. He was then readmitted to the Home and emigrated to New York six months later. Despite his unwillingness to remain in the Home, George became a frequent correspondent with RPS staff over the next seven years, updating them on his adventures in the Army of the Potomac during the American Civil War, although his letters were predominantly factual in nature.[93] Many of the children who were punished for infractions while within the Homes, however, wrote back affectionately to staff and came back to visit with their families.[94] It is evident that many of the boys chafed at the discipline, constraints and hard work of the school environment while they were there, but some years later recognized the benefits it brought. Twenty-two-year-old Thomas Bonnar wrote of how he, like many new boys, had counted down the days until his release from the school, but now he wished he was back there.[95] Charles Swann wrote from South Africa in 1888:

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[86] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 81.

[87] SHC, 2591/3/1, *Annual Report 1890:* MH letter, AF letter, pp. 7–8; SHC, 2271/1/21, *Annual Report 1889*, GSH, BC, HM, AW, RE, LW letters, pp. 54, 64–5, 69–73.

[88] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 124–31.

[89] SHC, 2271/10/20, Henry Hopwood; 2271/10/13, James Frappell.

[90] SHC, 2271/10/9, Peter Ridley; 2271/10/13, George Gandon; 2271/10/19, Nelson Jones.

[91] M. Leyshon, 'The struggle to belong: young people on the move in the countryside', *Population, Space and Place*, xvii (2011), 304–25, at p. 321.

> I also hope Mr Howe [his former housemaster] is still alive and in his old place, for he is a very good man, although I did not think so when I was there, but now I give three cheers for teaching one, or rather two things into my head, which I should never have known; and I thank Mr Pollard the gardener; and Mr Brown he tried to teach me all he could.[96]

Writing from the perspective of their late teens or early twenties, the young men and women also wrote with gratitude about the transformation they believed the Homes had made in their lives. Hodson Gaiter Smith had entered the RPS in 1879 aged thirteen from the rural market town of Shrewsbury. He wrote in 1888 from South Africa that a boy in the Home 'is now 100 per cent better off than if he were living in London or elsewhere', while twenty-three-year-old James Cooper wrote 'I am ever glad that I went to the school.'[97] George Woods, twenty-four, wrote 'I have gained a lot of good by being there the time I was.’[98] Evidence is less strong for the girls than for the boys, but given that by 1890, twenty years after the PMVH had opened, sixty old girls were visiting the home every year on Open Day, bringing with them their husbands and children, it reasonable to assume their sentiments were similar.[99] For the boys, almost all of whom were over the age of twelve when they entered the home, this recognition was particularly important because, unlike many of the girls, they were old enough on entering the home to have clear memories of their lives before institutionalized welfare. That children who had been punished while in school or those who had entered under difficult circumstances could recognize in later life the benefits welfare had brought to them is significant. It broadens our understanding of the welfare experience in the moment of delivery and provides a different insight into its longer-term impact.

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[92] SHC, 2271/10/21, William Page.

[93] SHC, 2271/10/9, George Martin.

[94] SHC, 2271/1/16, *Annual Report 1870*, WBG letter, pp. 43–5.

[95] SHC, 2271/121, *Annual Report 1889*, BT, pp. 76–8.

[96] *Annual Report 1889*, SC, pp. 62–3.

[97] SHC, 2271/1/21, *Annual Report 1888*, GSH, CJ, pp. 65–7.

Conclusion

By centring its analysis on the children who experienced welfare, this chapter has demonstrated the boundaries and limitations of familial affection and challenged the sacralization of working-class life that has developed in recent years. In much the same way that we are encouraged by Anna Davin to move past our expectations of what is ‘proper’ in our consideration of Victorian child employment, we need to put aside our partiality for the parental home and family environment when evaluating Victorian welfare.[100] Analysis of children’s backgrounds reveals that the present dichotomous presentation of the binaries between institutional care and family life need to be re-examined. If we consider how children themselves were shaped by the intersecting inequalities of Victorian life, we develop an insight into the comparative advantages that welfare might have seemed to offer to its recipients. Death, desertion, criminality and family reconstitution all played their part in severing bonds. Lives were messy, relationships complicated and not all families provided ideal conditions for children to thrive.

This is an important development in our understanding of child welfare provision. Once we recognize that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, institutional care could represent a preferable alternative for children to that of the family, not only do we undermine one of the key contentions of the dominant historiography on child removal, but we also begin to question some of the bigger twentieth-century narratives of progress in terms of welfare provision. Nineteenth-century investment in care provided a comparative advantage for institutionalized children that has disappeared in the intervening period, as relative living standards have improved and state investment in care has regressed.

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[98] SHC, 2271/1/21, *Annual Report 1889*, WG, pp. 61–2.

[99] SHC, 2591/1/14, *Annual Report 1890*.

[100] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p. 9.

Core to these new understandings is the process of tracing children and their families before and after entering welfare to examine their life course. Only by incorporating the whole range of available information can we gain deeper insights into the state, society and family. Over-reliance on institutional records reveals only a snapshot of children's encounters with welfare. Yet, children responded in ways that were contingent, complex and changed over time. Their perspectives altered as they aged and their priorities changed. Only by including the whole of their lives can we gain a deep understanding of their experiences with welfare.

Considering children situated within and separate to the family unit also highlights that children are individuals not a uniform age-categorized body. Within families, children's subjectivities were different from that of their siblings and constructing one view of institutionalized childhood risks obscuring this broad variety of responses. It also marginalizes the agency children demonstrated. There were limits to the control that families could exercise over children who were determined to resist adult intentions. Children could make decisions in unexpected ways, sometimes actively choosing life in institutional homes over family life and on other occasions demonstrating their agency through their power to leave. In their encounters with welfare, they accepted or pushed against adult expectations and regulations on behaviour to shape their outcomes. They were not Hendrick's 'passive objects' or Swain's 'victims' of misguided philanthropy but rather architects of their own futures.[101] Given such children's subsequent role as citizens of Britain and its empire, recognizing these factors opens us to new considerations of the life-long impact of care.

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[101] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 253; Swain, *Child, Race, Nation*.

3. 'Dear Sir, remember me often if possible': family, belonging and identity for children in care in Britain, *c.*1870–1920

Claudia Soares[1]

Lilian Madden migrated from Barnardo's Village Home for Girls to Canada in 1896 as a domestic servant at the age of twelve.[2] She and her sister left Liverpool on 30 July 1896, and arrived in Quebec after sailing on the Scotsman for a month with several other members of Barnardo's home. Little is known of what Lillian made of her new country upon arriving in Canada or of the challenges she faced in settling into her new life in Ontario. Unlike many other migrants, whose loneliness, isolation and yearning for 'home' and family endured for many years following their migration, Lilian would have found comfort in having her sister, and later, one of her brothers, Bertram, close by in Ontario. Lilian regularly visited her sister and given that Bertram later followed his sisters to Ontario, it is probable that she maintained some contact with her family members that remained in England.[3]

Despite having family close by, Lilian also chose to remain in touch with Barnardo's. She participated in the inspections they carried out: an expected feature of migrants' life after arriving in Canada, but which nevertheless required young people's assent. She also wrote letters to staff that documented her progress and news, and shortly after arriving in Ontario, donated one dollar to the charity and subscribed to the institution's *Ups*

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[1] I am grateful to the British Academy, grant reference pf170088, for their support of this work. I am indebted to Julie-Marie Strange for valuable comments and suggestions.

[2] Some children's names are anonymized in this chapter: I use children's names as they appear in published form in institutional periodicals. Case record material is partially anonymized (first name and surname initial) because of the sensitive nature of the content, which is not accessible to the public.

[3] Ancestry.com, Canada, *WW1 CEF Personnel Files, 1916*; *Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1938*; *Canada, Voters Lists, 1935–1980* [accessed 28 May 2020].

C. Soares, '"Dear Sir, remember me often if possible": family, belonging and identity for children in care in Britain, *c.*1870–1920', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 73–98.

and Downs magazine produced especially for migrants like herself. One of Lilian's letters was reprinted in *Ups and Downs* July 1899 issue, where she reported on her progress, well-being and happiness. She also enquired after one of her peers, Emily Siney, who had also migrated to Canada from Barnardo's, asking for her contact information so that she might keep in touch with her. Her letter stated:

> I don't forget the good times we used to have in the Village Home talking in our room, and then when we heard the pat of Mother's feet be snoring in our bed; but those childish days are gone … I have done very well in my place so far. This is all I can say this time, so good-bye. I remain your loving Home girl, Lilian Madden.[4]

In referring to the institution's matron as 'Mother' and in closing her letter 'your loving Home girl', Lilian's correspondence also indicates the impact that welfare experiences could have on belonging and identity. Lilian chose to, in this letter at least, construct her identity around her experience as a Barnardo's Girl – both historically and in the present, she claimed association, kinship and connection to the institution and the staff members who had cared for her, despite her separation in time and space from the organization. She also extended her sense of belonging by articulating feelings of love and affection for the Home and through the use of familial terminology to refer to staff members.

While Lilian's last contact with Barnardo's appears to have occurred in 1901, census and marriage records provide further glimpses of her life in Canada. Placed in domestic service with the Staples family in Durham, Ontario in 1900, when Lilian was sixteen, she remained there for some time, possibly until her marriage in 1903.[5] She married Charles William Sumner Gibbons, a carpenter, who had migrated to Canada from England seven months before, in Brant, Ontario. This marriage was short-lived: Charles died five years later, when their only son was just three years old.[6] It is not known whether Lilian was in touch with her mother who remained in London until her death in 1924.[7] Lilian lived in Canada until her death in 1969.[8]

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[4] 'Our girls', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 8 (July–Aug. 1902), pp. 54–5.

[5] Ancestry.com, *1901 Census of Canada*; *Cavan, Durham, Ontario*, p. 4, Family No. 32 [accessed 28 May 2020].

[6] Ancestry.com, *Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1937* [accessed 28 May 2020].

[7] Ancestry.com, *England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007*, General Register Office, Volume 1b, 147 [accessed 28 May 2020].

[8] Ancestry.com, *The Gazette*, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 3/2/1969 [accessed 28 May 2020].

Lilian's story of residential care and migration is typical of many other children who spent part of their childhood in British welfare institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite policies that sought to segregate children from problematic family members in order to allow them to make a fresh start and to aid their moral transformation, in practice, many children continued contact with family and friends. At the same time, children's institutions modelled their childcare practices on family ideals, by promoting the cultivation of affective relationships between children, their peers and institutional staff. Not only did continued relationships with institutional staff offer greater social capital and new networks of support in the wider world, but they also provided a source of warmth, friendship and affection, often for many years. As young people tried to navigate the challenges of the world beyond institutional walls, these relationships complicated children's perceptions of family, which in turn shaped their sense of belonging and identity.

This chapter explores children's and relatives' views of 'family' – both biological and institutional – by examining their responses to policies and practices in the two largest children's institutions operating in Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Dr Barnardo's Homes, founded in 1870, and The Waifs and Strays Society (WSS), established in 1881. Both institutions had a Protestant Evangelical ethos underpinning their work, which aimed to 'rescue' orphan, neglected, destitute and outcast children. They sought to 'save' children by providing them with a home, food, clothing, training and religious instruction that might equip them with the moral and industrial values considered necessary to become productive citizens. By 1905, Barnardo's had cared for approximately 8,500 children in ninety-six homes established since its foundation, while The WSS had cared for a total of 3,410 children in ninety-three established homes. The focus on two of the most prominent children's institutions operating in Britain at this time allows the chapter to highlight the similarities and differences between organizations. This demonstrates that, despite common attitudes and policies, institutions articulated distinctive approaches within a broader landscape of statutory and voluntary welfare provision. The type of welfare assistance provided to these children by Barnardo's and The WSS was typical of the era. It was driven by contemporary anxieties about an increasing population of deviant, criminal and degenerate 'slum' children, but also grounded in ideas about good citizenship, imperial duty and service to the nation.[9] The solution to this threat was perceived to be their removal from all forms of contagion – moral and physical – which included their separation from their inadequate home and family life.

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[9] S. Swain, 'Sweet childhood lost: idealized images of childhood in the British child rescue literature', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, ii (2009), 198–214; S. Swain,

How welfare institutions endeavoured to dismantle relationships between children and relatives has been well documented in scholarship.[10] Policies that censored or prohibited contact between children and family members, and their forced removal from family, relocation and migration, served to undermine children's relationships with relatives and friends.[11] Meanwhile, children's representations as orphans in institutional literature reinforced a public view of these children as cared for by nobody but the institution.[12] Parents have been treated as a fleeting presence in children's institutionalized lives: beyond admission, their continued involvement in children's lives, their knowledge, attitudes and responses to various childcare practices, and their experiences of navigating and negotiating the welfare system are for the most part absent from scholarship.[13] While some research has started to put parents back into view in welfare studies by exploring the ways in which they called upon those in power, such as local magistrates, to exert their parental rights over children, this chapter takes a different approach to uncover the competing and complex family models at play for institutionalized children.[14]

'Child rescue: the emigration of an idea', in *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives*, ed. J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 101–20; S. Swain and M. Hillel, ed., *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester, 2010).

[10] L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998); L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006); L. A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2000).

[11] J. A. Sheetz-Nguyen, *Victorian Women, Unwed Mothers and the London Foundling Hospital* (London, 2012); Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; G. Frost, '"Your mother has never forgotten you": illegitimacy, motherhood, and the London Foundling Hospital, 1860–1930', *Annales de Démographie Historique*, cxxvii (2014), 45–72; R. Pimm-Smith, 'District schools and the erosion of parental rights under the Poor Law: a case study from London (1889–1899)', *Continuity and Change*, xxxiv (2019), 401–23.

[12] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

[13] There are some exceptions that highlight parents' attempts to remain involved with children. However, in many instances parents only received news about children from institutional officials, rather than being able to contact children in a sustained and direct fashion. See Frost, 'Your mother has never forgotten you'; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*; G. Pugh, *London's Forgotten Children: Thomas Coram and The Foundling Hospital* (Stroud, 2007).

[14] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

The chapter first uses the charities' publications to argue that ideals about the family were central to institutional care in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By demonstrating how these organizations sought to manufacture an artificial family model, which aimed to provide children with new forms of social capital alongside emotional and material support, this chapter departs from scholarship that has previously highlighted disciplinary and punitive institutional practices. In doing so, the chapter shows how major voluntary welfare organizations modelled their practices on the nuclear family, rather than on ties associated with kinship or friendship. Children cared for within these settings were taught to view these affective ties as offering ultimate security.[15] The second part of the chapter examines individual care records and correspondence to chart the ways in which children and relatives sought to maintain affective ties. Here, the institutions' expectations relating to child–family contact are explored, as well as the contact achieved between children and families. Finally, the chapter examines children's responses to these competing notions of 'family' after leaving institutional care. Institutional training aimed to forge new identities for children that were shaped by contemporary citizenship ideals of productivity and morality.[16] By equipping children with skills to thrive independently, alongside a new network of support crafted through the institutional 'family', these agencies hoped that children would not return to their biological family for support. Former residents' lives after care were diverse, but many did choose to maintain contact with relatives, alongside relationships with institutional peers and staff. 'Letters home' to the institution, underused in previous studies, are analysed to consider how former residents gave meaning to their experiences and articulated feelings of belonging and identity.[17] This reveals the complexity of the emotional dynamics of working-class life, inside and outside the residential institution.[18]

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[15] L. Davidoff, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830–1960* (London, 1999); E. Griffin, 'The emotions of motherhood: love, culture, and poverty in Victorian Britain', *American Historical Review*, cxxiii (2018), 60–85; J. R. Gillis, *For Better, for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York, 1985); J. R. Gillis, 'Making time for family: the invention of family time(s) and the reinvention of family history', *Journal of Family History*, xxi (1996), 4–21; L. A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent–Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983); E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975); L. Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (London, 1979).

[16] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

[17] Exceptions are: L. M. Mair, '"Give my love": community and companionship among former ragged school scholars', *Family & Community History*, xxi (2018), 166–79; L. M. Mair, *Religion and Relationships in Ragged Schools: an Intimate History of Educating the Poor, 1844–1870* (London, 2019); C. Soares, 'Leaving the Victorian children's institution: aftercare, friendship and support', *History Workshop Journal*, lxxxvii (2019), 94–117.

Creating an institutional 'family'

The notion of 'family' for children in residential care was a contested but important issue. Ideas about 'family' mattered greatly to children's institutions: throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and with greater input of middle- and upper-class women in welfare administration, welfare provision was increasingly influenced by domestic and family-based models of care. Reformers, such as Florence Hill, Jane Senior and Louisa Twining, had called from the late 1860s for children's welfare institutions to adopt practices that might allow for the creation of a sense of a natural home and family life.[19] Large, barrack-style spaces that were used to mass children together were criticized because of the institutionalizing effects these sites had on 'inmates': they received little individual attention or care within them and remained ignorant of domestic and family life. These spaces were not like homes, but instead operated like prisons to contain and manage a large number of children. As such, smaller domestic sites, such as cottage homes, were promoted as producing more favourable conditions in which to care for children. At the heart of these spaces was the idea that these sites might enable the creation of cosy, familial life. Some research has examined the increasingly domesticated nature of care provision across statutory and voluntary welfare, focusing on the scale and material environments of these institutions,[20] but the affective familial practices that many institutions sought to create have remained a peripheral focus. While provision of welfare in smaller 'home' settings may have enabled the provision of more 'kindly' elements of care,[21] little research has unpicked the familial ideology and rhetoric that was central to these 'new' domestic forms of childcare and the practices that aimed to provide inmates with a sense of family life.[22]

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[18] A. Blunt and R. Dowling, *Home* (Abingdon, 2006), p. 22; S. Broomhall, *Emotions in the Household 1200–1900* (Basingstoke, 2008); J.-M. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865–1914* (Cambridge, 2015); E. Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn: a People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (London, 2013); J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010); E. Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (Oxford, 1993).

[19] J. Nassau Senior, 'Report on education of girls in pauper schools', in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, Third Annual Report of the Local Government Board 1874* (Parl. Papers 1874 [C.1071], xxxv.1), pp. 311–95.

[20] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*; J. Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Basingstoke, 2015); J. Hamlett, L. Hoskins and R. Preston, ed., *Residential Institutions in Britain, 1725–1970: Inmates and Environments* (London, 2013); S. Soanes, ' "The place was a home from home": identity and belonging in the English cottage home for convalescing psychiatric patients, 1910–1939', in *Residential Institutions in Britain*, ed. Hamlett, Hoskins and Preston, pp. 109–24; L. Murdoch, 'From barrack schools to family cottages: creating domestic space for late Victorian poor children', in Lawrence and Starkey, *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, pp. 147–74; C. Soares, 'A "permanent environment

Barnardo's and The WSS both sought to manufacture a sense of ideal family life.[23] The charities' periodicals referred to institutions as families that were ever-growing and to children who were now cocooned safely in loving family life. Staff across both institutions were encouraged to assume roles as 'mothers' and 'fathers'.[24] The WSS handbook, for example, outlined that its matrons and masters were expected to display 'personal kindness and individual sympathy' as well as show a 'loving interest in the spiritual and temporal welfare' of those they cared for.[25] In doing so, they might create a 'true friendship with children that was deep and long-lasting' in nature.[26] Meanwhile, Barnardo assumed the role of 'Father' to the 'largest family in the world'.[27] Not only was this role promoted to his supporters through periodicals such as *Night and Day*, but he readily adopted the role of father to the institutional family when addressing children passing through his institution. Former 'inmates' who subscribed to *Ups and Downs*, for example, were encouraged to think of themselves as part of a large family with Barnardo as father. *Night and Day* regularly emphasized that the Cottage and Boarding Out schemes were the only way to achieve what Barnardo called 'The Family Plan'. Girls in particular were thought to benefit from the institutional family. If the institution was to 'bring up young girls ... to insure the highest results in life', they must 'let them live in small family groups, not so large as to render it impossible for the head,

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of brightness, warmth, and 'homeliness' ": domesticity and authority in a Victorian children's institution', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, xxiii (2018), 1–24.

[21] L. Twining, *Workhouses and Women's Work* (London, 1858), pp. 8, 11, 13.

[22] An exception is S. Ash, *Funding Philanthropy: Dr. Barnardo's Metaphors, Narratives and Spectacles* (Liverpool, 2016).

[23] Soanes, ' "The place was a home from home" '; Murdoch, 'From barrack schools to family cottages: creating domestic space for late Victorian poor children'.

[24] 'The heart of the home', *Our Waifs and Strays* (June 1891), p. 137.

[25] *WSS Handbook for Workers, Part II*, pp. 4, 10.

[26] 'After-care', *Our Waifs and Strays* (Aug. 1904), p. 349.

[27] 'Personal notes', *Night and Day*, Volume 12 (Dec. 1888), p. 129; 'Personal notes', *Night and Day*, Volume 11 (Nov. 1887), p. 121; 'Some Stepney jottings', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 6 (July 1901), p. 22.

or "mother" to become personally acquainted with and to study carefully the character of each girl'.[28]

Staff members thus assumed a crucial role in creating the institutional 'family'. In an article entitled 'A new village family', the author 'An Old Mother', stated: 'We are always building new cottages at Ilford: – not, indeed, with bricks and mortar, but with living precious stones, which must fit together to form a family.'[29] While reformers extolled the virtues of raising children in smaller cottages rather than large barrack-style institutions to create a sense of family, the author here indicates that facilitating children's individuals personalities to fit together and to get along was, in fact, the task of utmost importance in building a sense of family. Staff members assumed a crucial role in this task: 'the Mother has need of all her energy' in order to create a 'happy home circle' with 'good order', in which inhabitants are trained in 'quietness and obedience', and benefit from the 'kindly influences and pleasant glow of the household hearth'. The author argued that an ideal, happy institutional family could only be achieved by providing new arrivals with a home that shared these qualities.

But importantly too, the idea of the institutional family required the cooperation of institutional inmates. Within Barnardo's homes, he stated that 'Family life is made the most of, and the cottage girls live as if they were sisters. Indeed, many sisters are among them, for the Homes often admit a whole family of children'.[30] The notion of family life, too, referred to the everyday rituals, routines and practices enacted within the institutional spaces that might work not only to enhance a sense of family cohesiveness between children and 'mothers' or 'fathers', but also by creating an affective peer culture for children. Moments of celebration and other special events beyond the everyday household routine might help to cement a sense of familial togetherness for inhabitants. Nurturing and affective practices, such as treating children through the provision of pocket money, gifts, holidays and days out, helped to foster family time and create a deeper social bond between inhabitants.[31]

Maintaining family bonds

Institutional policies discouraged and, at times, prohibited contact between children and relatives. Relatives could not contact children in The Foundling

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[28] 'Before they call I will answer', *Night and Day*, Volume 19 (June 1895), p. 80.

[29] 'A new village family', *Night and Day*, Volume 12 (March 1888), pp. 38–9.

[30] 'Our girls' village home', *Night and Day*, Volume 35 (Oct. 1913), pp. 44–5.

[31] C. Soares, *A Home from Home? Children and Social Care in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, 1870–1920* (Oxford, forthcoming).

Hospital directly; instead, mothers had to ask members of staff to provide them with short updates on their children's health and welfare. Mothers could also apply for an 'introduction' – a meeting to reunite mother and child – once children came of age.[32] Meanwhile, work by Abrams and Murdoch on Quarriers Homes and Barnardo's, respectively, has demonstrated that these institutions discouraged contact where possible: occasional visiting days during the week made it hard for working parents to visit.[33] Barnardo often refused to grant access to parents deemed to be of questionable moral character.[34] Practices, such as children's relocation and migration, and the often-deliberate obscuring of children's location and circumstances, were designed to erode familial bonds.

Barnardo's implied its preference for contact to be severed between children and their family in much of its public-facing literature. In literature aimed at institutions' supporters, the charity was often critical of children's relatives, presenting them as an impediment to the best interests of the child and to the provision of care. The charity's magazine *Night and Day*, for example, stated:

> many of the children possess degraded or vicious relatives … But, alas! These relatives are often the greatest hindrances that a child has, and while they exist it becomes very difficult to send the children to the homes of people in humble life, who may at any moment receive a visit from violent and ill-conducted persons, who are quite likely to endeavour to resume by force the possession of the child, if they can but get an opportunity.[35]

A similar sentiment was conveyed in another article, which stated that children's 'worst enemies are their own relatives, whose feelings of attachment to them are often dictated only by the most utter selfishness and by complete indifference to the children's real happiness and welfare'.[36] Instead, Barnardo's institutional family was positioned as superior to children's relatives in caring for and raising children.

While the organization may have desired to prohibit contact between children and interfering family members, in reality, the complete erosion of ties between children and relatives was difficult to achieve and was the source of constant negotiation and complaint from relatives. The institution also acknowledged the inevitability of children and relatives maintaining contact. According to the charity's guidance and regulations, foster parents of boarded-out children were required to accommodate visiting relatives on specific days, as long as they could provide the necessary written authorization from Barnardo's to permit visitation. This requirement allowed the charity to vet applications for visitation, and to grant or deny such privileges. Barnardo's stated in the guidance that 'only respectable relatives are granted the privilege of visiting children' and that they should permit 'no other visit from *relatives* or *friends* of the Child without DR. BARNARDO'S authorisation'.[37] Each girl at the Ilford Girls' Home was allowed to receive two visitors, either friends or family members, once every three months on set visiting days.[38]

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[32] Frost, 'Your mother has never forgotten you'.

[33] Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

[34] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, p. 104.

[35] 'Personal notes', *Night and Day*, Volume 10 (Nov. 1886), p. 160.

[36] 'Personal notes', *Night and Day*, Volume 20 (May 1896), p. 22.

These conditions and the infrequency of visiting days made it harder for relatives to maintain contact with children. Permission to visit children was dependent on subjective assessments made about familial morality, conduct and character. For some, contact was impossible if the institution deemed them to be problematic or immoral. Nevertheless, many institutionalized children were able to retain ties with family members and friends. Contact was often quickly resumed upon leaving care: updates and news about young people's progress after leaving the institution highlight that youths located in both Britain and Canada routinely travelled to visit and stay with friends and relatives in their old neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, other articles demonstrated that where visits between youths and family members were impossible, letters, gifts and money were exchanged.[39]

Of significance too is the shifting rhetoric employed to describe children's family and friends, particularly for child migrants, who were often emigrated in order to distance them from apparently problematic relatives. Prior to and during children's institutionalization, the organization's public-facing literature was overtly critical and disapproving of relatives and the bonds of attachment they held for children. However, in reports about young people's progress following discharge from the institution, little judgement was cast on family members and friends. Accounts of these continued relationships were unembellished by conjecture and most were presented as unproblematic for young people's future well-being. An 1899 edition of *Ups and Downs*, for example, described how Alfred Barnes was shortly to travel from Montreal to England with the intention of spending a couple of months with his relatives in London.[40] Meanwhile, Mary Simpson saved enough money for a return ticket to England in 1900 to visit her relatives before returning to Canada in the autumn to take up a new situation.[41] One article published in Barnardo's magazine for migrants suggests that young people routinely enquired about their relatives if they had not kept in touch, and that the institution always assisted children in tracing and reuniting with relatives:

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[37] Emphasis in original. 'Boarded-out children', *Night and Day*, Volume 12 (Dec. 1888), p. 141.

[38] 'Visiting day', *The Children's Treasury* (1876), p. 221.

[39] 'Jottings from our annals – IV', *Night and Day*, Volume 34 (Dec. 1911), p. 78.

[40] 'Home chat', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 4 (Jan. 1899), p. 39.

> Here and there, in this letter and that, is to be found the oft-repeated paragraph … an enquiry for news of a mother or father, or relatives or friends, in the United Kingdom, long since passed out of knowledge. It would seem that with maturity comes a sober appreciation of domestic and family ties, forgotten or ignored in the heyday of youth.[42]

And in seeking to offer 'solace for such aching hearts', the article described that Barnardo's staff were 'always willing to do anything in our power in cases of this kind … and thus we may hope before long to be successful in putting you in communication with, at anyrate, someone amongst your relatives and friends'.[43]

The institution also helped young people to stay in contact with family members in other ways, including an annual Christmas excursion from Canada to England, and an assistance programme that helped child migrants bring out relatives from England.[44] Young people apparently made use of these schemes. In 1900, Horace Blunt saved enough money to help his mother emigrate to join him while Jennie Kibble facilitated the emigration of her younger sister.[45] In addition to the 242 children that migrated to Canada in the first of five parties to leave England that year, there were fifteen 'outsiders' who had 'not been inmates of the Homes, and comprising chiefly of relatives of boys in Canada who have advanced the necessary amount for their emigration expenses'.[46]

Extant WSS sources suggest that the Society was more flexible than Barnado's in permitting familial contact. Despite subjective and often derogatory accounts of children's families that accompanied application forms written by esteemed members of their local community, the Society presented a more moderate view of relatives' character. Each issue of their monthly magazine highlighted a selection of cases recently accepted for admission, and provided a statement of details:

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[41] 'Our girls', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 9 (April 1903), p. 87.

[42] 'Dick Whittington among the archives', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 5 (April 1900), p. 62.

[43] 'Dick Whittington among the archives', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 5 (April 1900), p. 62.

[44] 'Editorial notes', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 7 (Jan. 1902), pp. 11–12.

[45] 'Home chat', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 5 (April 1900), p. 16.

[46] 'Our twentieth year's emigration work', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 7 (Jan. 1902), pp. 18–19.

> A boy of 11; father dead; mother is in very bad health, and her earnings are very precarious. Since the death of her husband, the boy's mother was deceived into a marriage with a man who was afterwards found to have a wife living in Jersey. Two other children to support.
>
> Four children, the oldest a boy of 8, and three girls, 7, 5, and 3 years old; found sitting in the street on a March evening, at nine o'clock, on an old mattress which, with other things, had been thrown out of the house by the landlord, for non-payment of the rent. They were ravenously hungry, and in a shocking state; and on being taken to the Workhouse, their clothing had to be destroyed. When summonsed, the father was found helplessly drunk, and they had no mother. The father is now in prison.[47]

Unlike Barnardo's, The WSS offered no explicit judgement in communicating details of the family life of children they admitted, instead allowing readers to make their own assessments. However, the use of emotive language, evocative, detailed descriptions of the material conditions of familial poverty, and the suggestive highlighting of parents' failings all helped to shape readers' verdicts about the character of children's relatives.

In response to reformers' calls to create a sense of natural family life in children's institutions, The WSS's publications increasingly acknowledged the importance of the parent–child bond to children's development. In many cases, institutions allowed relatives to correspond with inhabitants, enquire about their well-being with staff members and foster parents, and to visit children on specific days, as long as contact was deemed not to endanger the child in any way. The WSS set out its mission statement, claiming that it intended to neither break children's family ties, nor 'replace' biological relatives. Rather, the Society stated that 'where it can be avoided it is wiser not to break through the natural tie which no institutional life can replace to the young child'.[48] Such terms shaped relatives' perceptions about their rights and entitlements: in many cases, parents seemed to be knowledgeable that they were not wholly rescinding their rights to or responsibilities for children, regardless of the expectation that they would wholly commit children to the institution's care. Indeed, relatives were quick to involve persons and agencies of power to support their case when they were unhappy with institutional decisions or felt that their concerns were unheard.[49]

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[47] 'Jottings', *Our Waifs and Strays* (June 1892), p. 3.

[48] 'Evil surroundings', *Our Waifs and Strays* (Nov. 1885), p. 6.

Application forms for admission and accompanying letters from influential community figures offered subjective and often pejorative opinions about the morality, respectability and character of families. Yet, despite these critical and derogatory letters, relatives' rights to communicate with or visit children were seldom rescinded. Where contact was denied, judgements were seemingly based on ensuring the safety and best interests of the child. Johanna M.'s mother was not allowed to contact her because in the past she had repeatedly taken Johanna out on the streets with her while she solicited trade as an apparent prostitute, and as such, the Society deemed her most likely to continue to have an immoral influence on her.[50]

Other cases of family contact were less straightforward and could be contentious to negotiate even between staff members. One matron informed WSS Founder and Director Edward de Montjoie Rudolf that she had turned away two 'rude' and 'immoral' friends who had arrived at the home to visit Isabella B. because she judged them to be 'dreadful women who seemed bent on having her back'. Rudolf responded by reminding the matron that Isabella's friends had a right to visit her and should be allowed to do so. While the matron conceded to his advice, she warned that if, at any point in the future, Isabella's friends seemed to be immoral, she would immediately turn them away.[51]

For other children under the Society's care, relatives continued to play an important role in their lives even when physically distanced. Many relatives sought to keep in touch through regular letter writing and monthly visits to institutional homes. However, distance and expense made visits either impossible or irregular for many poor families. Letters sent between relatives and the Society nevertheless suggest that there was some space to negotiate the ability to visit children's placements. One mother complained to The WSS Head Office that the cost of a one-day ticket from her home in London to Bournemouth where her son was, was a 'great strain' that prevented her from visiting him more than once a year. She wrote a number of times in desperation to ask the Society to transfer him closer to her so that she might visit him more easily and more often. The Society acceded to her series of pleas a year later when a space opened up in one of their boys' homes in London.[52] Meanwhile, another mother expressed her distress at 'the thought of the long distance and at her consequent inability to see her child', who was due to be transferred from Knebworth, Hertfordshire to Dolgellau in north-west Wales.[53] WSS policies did not allow children to return to their family homes temporarily or for holidays, but many family members wrote to ask for permission in any case and often repeatedly.[54]

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[49] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*; Soares, *A Home from Home?*

[50] WSS case file 9648, application form and letter from Governor Philips, Children's Aid Society, 30 May 1903; Letter from Edward Rudolf to Miss Walters, Cold Ash Home, 15 April 1908.

[51] WSS case file 5, letter from Miss Rye to Edward Rudolf, 10 March 1882.

Despite rising literacy rates among the poor, maintaining contact by letter could also be difficult and sporadic. Not only was letter writing time-consuming and expensive for those struggling to stave off destitution, but the ability to write with some degree of confidence and ease required habitual practice.[55] If parents did not write to children, it did not mean that they did not care; others waited to visit occasionally throughout the year or wrote only when needed. Meanwhile, for children residing in institutions or with foster families, some degree of assistance with letter writing may have been required, and especially so for younger children who probably had little experience, if any at all, in letter writing.

Despite being sporadic, letters were exchanged between children and relatives on special occasions. One girl received a letter and a gift of a bible for her birthday,[56] while another received five shillings from her mother at Christmas.[57] Others wrote in response to important events: Thomas T. wrote to his mother to let her know that many of his fellow residents were due to emigrate to Canada, perhaps to alert her to the possibility that he, too, might be chosen to be sent overseas. Concerned by his letter, Thomas' mother wrote almost immediately to the institution to begin the process of requesting his removal.[58] The boy and his mother appear to have worked together to ensure that their family was not broken up permanently. Another mother, who had sent her daughter gifts in the past, sent another before she was due to emigrate. The matron opened the package first: perhaps because she thought it suspect, but more likely because mail was subject to inspection. Alongside the mother's present was a letter that pleaded with her daughter not to go to Canada, but to come home instead.[59] Her daughter never received the letter, and it is very unlikely she received the accompanying gift.

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[52] WSS case file 9400, letters from Maria H. to Edward Rudolf, 20 April 1906; 4 June 1906; 6 June 1906; Nov 1906; and 8 Jan. 1907.

[53] WSS case file 9288, letter from Rev. R. to WSS branch secretary, 26 April 1904.

[54] See eg: WSS case file 9693, letter from Agnes C. to Edward Rudolf, 19 May 1906; case file 15004, letter from S. M. Miles, Charity Organisation Society to Edward Rudolf, 28 Sept. 1917; case file 18355, letter from Sergeant Nottingham, NSPCC to Edward Rudolf, 9 Dec. 1922.

[55] S. King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s–1830s* (Montreal, 2019).

[56] WSS case file 7687, letter from Jane U. to matron Miss Stillwell, 19 April 1902.

[57] WSS case file 1106, letter from Barnes Ladies Association, 31 March 1892.

[58] WSS case file 9455, letter from Elizabeth T. to Miss Arthur, April 1905.

Overall, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which children and relatives kept in touch. Few records exist that document visits received by children in each of the Society's homes. Letters that survive in the Society's archives were, by definition, unusual. They had found their way into individual case records because, following inspection, something in their contents warranted further investigation. Some letters filed in case records were unlikely to have been received or read by the intended recipient. Meanwhile, many other letters would have been exchanged without additional intervention by staff; correspondence containing seemingly trivial ephemera, which only had meaning to author and recipient, was deemed to be mundane and risk-free by staff. As such, these ordinary letters were not sequestered by staff, but instead were probably kept by children as cherished possessions and reminders of the strength of love, devotion and yearning that was felt among family members.

Evidence thus demonstrates that the practices of both institutions were more complicated than simply severing children's relationships with their family and friends. While this may well have been the desire of these institutions in some cases – particularly where children had problematic relatives – this was impossible to achieve in practice. Family members, friends and children were active agents in negotiating and contesting practices that sought to prevent, prohibit, restrict and limit contact. As close readings of institutional literature and policy show, welfare institutions could be flexible and accommodating in their practices regarding familial contact. Relatives' treatment and their contact with children was shaped by the personalities of those that wielded power: as Murdoch has shown, Barnardo often went to great lengths to supervise and restrict some children's relationships with their relatives,[60] while Rudolf encouraged his staff members to be amenable and obliging to relatives' contact with and involvement in the care of children. The publicly stated intentions of both institutions, too, suggest a more complicated understanding of children's relationships with their families. Both institutions acknowledged that despite providing children with a sense of ideal domestic life through their creation of an institutional family model, both children and relatives retained intimate and affective bonds through their absence and even when contact was infrequent. While institutions had the power to mediate and supervise these relationships during children's institutionalization, they accepted that they could have little influence on these bonds following children's discharge.

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[59] WSS case file 9452, letter from Mrs Dogen to Edward Rudolf, 23 April 1911.

[60] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

As a result, children's understandings and experiences of welfare in voluntary institutions were diverse, dependent on a range of factors including the institution they resided in, the staff members responsible for making decisions about contact with relatives and the institution's assessment of familial character. In turn, understandings of relatives' character could be shaped by individuals entirely unaffiliated with the welfare agency. Important figures in local communities, such as clergymen, teachers, police officials, philanthropists and even neighbours, possessed a great deal of power over how children's relatives were represented and understood by institutional staff. This could affect whether children retained their ties with family and friends.

Children's responses to family practices

The dual models of family – biological and institutional – shaped children's sense of selfhood and identity. The family unit, whether biological or artificially constructed, was the first and most important site for children's socialization and emotional development, which served as a microcosm of broader societal norms and relationships. Where children's biological families were deemed to be unsuitable, as was the case with some children admitted to residential care, the institutional family model functioned as part of a larger system of reformation, in which familial-type relationships created within the institution sought to educate poor, 'undomesticated' children about the value of domesticity and family life. This education aimed to influence how they raised their own children and made a home. Letters written back to the institution following children's discharge from care provide insight into how this type of intervention affected young people and their sense of being in the world.

Letters written back to the institutional home formed a vital aspect of early aftercare processes that welfare institutions such as The WSS and Barnardo's established to monitor progress from afar and provide further support in times of need.[61] Numerous 'letters home' survive in case records, while others were published in institutional periodicals. These letters speak of children's attachment to the institution, their desire to develop their relationships with staff, and their recognition of the importance of family, especially the institutional family that had at times afforded them new opportunities in life. It is not possible to determine the veracity of the published letters: they appear either fully or partially anonymized, which frustrates efforts to trace them back to original case file content. These published letters are, however, remarkably similar in content and tone to young people's letters 'home' that were merely added to case files and not designed for publication. These letters can thus reveal how children responded to the institutions' idealization of friendship and familial relationships.

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[61] Soares, 'Leaving the Victorian children's institution'; Soares, *A Home from Home?*; Mair, *Religion and Relationships in Ragged Schools*.

The published literature provides a telling narrative of how welfare agencies wanted children to imagine their institutional homes and to represent the relationships forged within them. As Rebecca Swartz's chapter in this volume highlights, published letters extolled institutional success while also providing insight into children's experiences – usually positively framed – of welfare interventions. The WSS's periodicals assured readers that children imagined and acknowledged staff as family members: Mrs B., the matron of the Mirfield home, for example, 'was *always* called mother by the children'.[62] Barnardo similarly stated the girls who lived in his Girls' Village Home (G.V.H.) thought of their matron as mother. For some, yearning and nostalgia for the home occasioned frequent visits from former 'inmates' later in life. He stated:

> The Girls who have lived there – many of them from babyhood up to their late teens – keep a warm corner in their hearts for the "G.V.H." They write letters to their former 'mother'; they visit the old cottage at holiday times; they bring in later years husband or children to see the Village. They leave it with tears, and return with smiles and laughter.[63]

Such statements promoted the idea that these institutions were so successful at creating a sense of warm, cosy family life that bonds and relationships between inhabitants endured well after children were discharged from these homes. Additionally, periodicals and correspondence pointed to the intimacy that developed between children while residing in the institution and later in the lifecycle following children's discharge. Former inmates kept in touch with each other, sometimes through correspondence, but often by visiting each other, frequently across great distances. For young people who had migrated to Canada, *Ups and Downs* provided a space in which to maintain relationships that might have been lost over time or distance, as well as an opportunity to trace these friends and reunite.

Letters also played a role in allowing young people to make sense of their experiences and to construct, explore and come to terms with their identity. Nostalgia and yearning for the institutional home and the relationships that made the institutional family were common emotions in letters sent home by young people. A letter from a former WSS boy, Harry M., reprinted in the institution's periodical, for example, stated:

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[62] Emphasis in original. 'A round of visits: XIII. St Agnes', Mirfield', *Our Waifs and Strays* (Feb. 1893), p. 19.

[63] 'Our girls' village home' *Night and Day*, Volume 35 (Oct. 1913), pp. 44–5.

> Dear Sir … you cannot imagine the joy I have in the thoughts of writing, as it were, home. Could I only come back for one short hour, for one more run around the front field, for one more choir practice … I must stop – there's something in my throat keeps rising, and it's all I can do to keep it down – that's the kind of feeling I have for the Home where I spent the happiest days of life … Dear Sir, remember me often if possible…[64]

In his letter, Harry seeks to articulate his connection to his institutional 'home' and to sustain his childhood attachment. His attention to specific activities undertaken with fellow residents suggests that his sense of belonging was rooted in the interpersonal dynamics and sociability of the home. Here, his fantasy of returning home provided a source of comfort. Harry may well have hoped that the act of remembrance would renew his bonds with the home, while also consolidating his identity as belonging to the institution as a former 'inmate' or one of the Society's 'Old Boys'.

It is unclear what prompted Harry's letter back to the institution, if indeed there was a reason to write. As other historians have shown, nostalgic views of past events were often elicited by gruelling, traumatic or challenging experiences in the present, such as war, migration and resettlement.[65] Recent difficulties, ruptures and dislocations in his life course may have elicited Harry's letter and his act of recalling an idealized view of his childhood home. Renewing relationships with the home and its staff provided important reference points that helped young people come to terms with the present through recalling the past: these reflective practices could be essential to grounding oneself and understanding selfhood. Conversely, his letter may well simply have been a signal of his affection for the institution that had provided him with a happy childhood.

Young people's correspondence allowed them to express a sense of belonging. This was particularly important for children who had experienced residential care, many of whom may have experienced little stability, affection and nurture prior to institutional admission. As Gillian

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[64] 'Letter from Harry Martin', *Our Waifs and Strays* (March 1898), p. 258.

[65] D. A. Gerber, 'Moving backward and moving on: nostalgia, significant others, and social reintegration in nineteenth-century British immigrant personal correspondence', *The History of the Family*, xxiii (2016), 291–314; M. Roper, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', *Historical Journal*, liv (2011), 421–51; S. Matt, *Homesickness: an American History* (Oxford, 2014).

Lamb's chapter in this volume reveals, institutional welfare provision could afford a better material quality of life. For these children, a more permanent home that brought them out of danger, the provision of warm clothing and regular mealtimes, as well as the ability to foster bonds with fellow inhabitants and staff members, may have offered a richer life than they had previously known. Of course, and as research has documented, this was not the experience for many children who suffered varying degrees of isolation, exploitation, trauma and abuse within residential welfare institutions.[66] The institutional home meant different things for different individuals and these meanings could change over the life course. However, a number of young people who had spent their childhoods in nineteenth-century residential care were keen to identify and be acknowledged as 'old boys' or 'old girls'. Letters sent back to the institution by former inmates routinely referred to themselves as such,[67] while several membership clubs were established for former institutional inhabitants.[68]

It is probable that fashioning an identity as an 'old boy' or 'old girl' brought with it a sense of solidarity, closeness and belonging for some individuals who, following their discharge from the institution, might have few relationships that offered intimacy and support in the wider world. Some children had few or no surviving relatives because relationships had broken down. Relationships with peers and institutional staff were important forms of social capital for those who left the institution and entered the wider world with next to nothing. For some, acknowledgement from institutional staff as an 'old boy' or 'old girl' was important: institutions frequently promoted an image of the 'ideal' former inmate as a young person that, following discharge, appreciated the care that they had received, and strove to do well and prove themselves a credit to the Society's work. This ideal meant achieving economic independence, leading a moral and humble life, providing for family, and expressing gratitude to God and to the institution's work to 'rescue' them.[69]

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[66] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*; Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; G. Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (London, 2009); Swain and Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*; K. Wright and S. Swain, 'Speaking the unspeakable, naming the unnameable: the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse', *Journal of Australian Studies*, xlii (2018), 139–52; Swain, 'Child rescue'; J. Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869–1924* (London, 1980); G. Lynch, *Remembering Child Migration: Faith, Nation-Building, and the Wounds of Charity* (London, 2016).

[67] 'Our prize competition', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 11 (Jan. 1904), p. 59; Letter from Harry Levy, *Ups and Downs*, Volume 11 (Jan. 1904), p. 30.

[68] WSS Old Boys and Old Girls Leagues, Barnardo's Old Boys' Society (B.O.B.S) and Barnardo's Old Boys' Benefit Society. For reference to BOBS see: 'The Barnardo boy', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 7 (October 1901), pp. 48–52; for Barnardo's Old Boys' Benefit Society, see: 'Editorial notes', *Ups and Downs*, Volume 10 (January 1904), pp. 7–9.

Numerous letters published in both institutions' periodicals made reference to these markers of success. Mary Ann Jane Tooth's letter, for example, expressed her pride in keeping her place for nearly two years, and her hope to please her mistress so that she might 'keep her for as long as she likes'. She also stated that she was 'doing her best to save my money for the bank. My mistress says that I am very careful with my money and that she never had any girl so saving like me'.[70] Meanwhile, Mary Dalgarno's letter published in *Ups and Downs* stated that she liked her employment and was enjoying life in Canada better than England, and that she hoped to hear from some of the old friends she grew up with in Barnardo's Homes. She closed her letter stating, 'I am not ashamed to say that I am a Home girl, for I cannot thank Dr. Barnardo enough for what he has done for me.'[71]

Others who had grown up in the homes rejected identities as an 'old boy' or 'old girl'. They expressed shame and embarrassment at having been victims of poverty or recipients of stigmatized charity. A number of agencies struggled to monitor residents' trajectories after leaving institutional care and explained that some young people avoided further contact with the institution. They sought to keep their backgrounds secret, so that they might fashion a new identity or preserve an image that was free from the taint of pauperism and institutional life. Indeed, for some, doing so allowed them to gain higher-paid work.[72] One former WSS inhabitant wrote to the Society to offer a small donation. An accompanying letter highlighted that although she read The WSS periodical *Our Waifs and Strays* to her daughter every month, she did 'not tell her that her own mother was one of those same poor little girls fifteen years ago. I think she is better left untold. I shudder to think what might have happened to me … had it not been for your grand Society'.[73]

Although grateful for the care she received from the institution, her reluctance to divulge this information to even her own family ensured that there were no visible, lasting indications that the woman had been a welfare recipient. Institutional homes were experienced in a multitude of ways. Yet, whether understood as positive or negative, the evidence suggests the lasting impact of childhood experiences on people's identities across the life course.

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[69] Soares, *A Home from Home?*; Soares, 'Leaving the Victorian children's institution'; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

[70] Letter from Mary Ann Jane Tooth, *Ups and Downs*, Volume 9 (April 1903), p. 88.

[71] Letter from Mary Dalgarno, *Ups and Downs*, Volume 9 (April 1903), pp. 90–1.

[72] Soares, 'Leaving the Victorian children's institution'; House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, Department Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, Evidence (Parl. Papers 1897 [C.8290]), p. 644.

[73] 'Lenten savings', *Our Waifs and Strays* (Feb. 1907), p. 28.

Despite providing an idealized family form within the institution, many children returned to live with relatives after institutional care. However, this did not necessarily mean that bonds with staff members or co-residents were forsaken. Lily A., aged ten, entered The WSS St Lawrence's Home in Exeter with her sister Mabel, aged twelve, in 1903. Their mother was described as doing her best for them since her husband's death, but that she was not 'entirely satisfactory', having had two further illegitimate children. During her time in the institution, Lily kept in touch with her mother and, in 1907, returned to live with her for a month. She returned to the Home, however, although the reasons why are unclear: it may have been too difficult for her mother to maintain her. After she was discharged to service in 1909, evidence shows that she continued to foster an intimate and affective relationship with her former matron. The choice to keep in touch with her matron was a personal decision: records show that her sister Mabel did not attempt to sustain a relationship with WSS staff after her discharge from care. Lily's letters indicate a reciprocal emotional bond: Lily's letter in 1909 thanked the matron for sending her a gift of a bow and collar. While the exchange of gifts between former institutional 'inmates' and staff members was unusual, staff members frequently provided emotional support and, at times, material support was offered to young people by the Head Office. The provision of resources was usually well documented and rationalized. It ranged from routine expenses, such as railway fares or lodging expenses, to specialist provision including items such as a replacement surgical boot.[74]

Lily also sustained a close relationship with her mother, who she saw at least every week, and she stated that she was paid well enough in service to pay her mother to do her washing.[75] By doing her washing, Lily's mother performed her care and love for her daughter through labour, while Lily's payment to her mother functioned both as a source of additional income and as an expression of care. A number of letters sent by Lily to her former matron at the start of 1911, when she was aged eighteen, suggest that she had experienced sexual harassment or assault from her new master. She wrote that her master:

> was trying to get me to do disgusting things to me. I told my mother about it, and she told me everything I did not know. I was so pleased she told me because

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[74] WSS case file 6741, letter from Charles W. to WSS Head Office, 22 March 1910; WSS case file 5818, letter from M. Bedford to E. Rudolf, May 1908.

[75] WSS case file 9445, letter from Lily A. to matron at Sunnyside Home, Winchester, Jan. 1911.

> he tried to put his hands up my clothes, and the second Monday I was here, he was awful. He kept saying you are naughty – it is atrocious because he could not do what he wanted to … I told him I would tell my mother and ever since then he has not touched me.[76]

Lily benefitted from her relationships with both her mother and her matron in different ways in resolving the danger she faced. She alerted her mother to her master's behaviour and was duly provided with information that she found useful.[77] Given the personal and distressing threat, it is unsurprising that Lily chose to approach her mother. Lily's choice to keep in regular contact with her matron meant that she also felt comfortable approaching her for help when she needed it most. Receiving Lily's letter, her matron immediately arranged her removal and helped her find a new place of work. While previous correspondence suggests that Lily's mother had successfully secured employment for her daughter in the past, instead of discharging her back to her mother's care to find employment, the Society secured employment immediately for her and in doing so was able to oversee her well-being and monitor her progress from afar. The Society may have considered Lily's supervision necessary following her master's sexual assault. Nevertheless, Lily's letters demonstrate that the matron occupied an important position in her network of friends and family. The longevity of relationships with institutional staff proved advantageous in times of need, providing young people with new forms of social capital that extended beyond their immediate family and community.

For some children and young people, connections to biological family remained resilient, despite institutions' attempts to undermine these bonds. William L. was aged thirteen when he was received into The WSS's care in June 1905.[78] His mother had died in childbirth, so he had lived with his deaf father and stepmother for a number of years. His father was described as a 'very rough kind of man' who 'had not done well for any of his children'. His eldest sister, Harriet, had run away, and his second sister, Julia, had been taken into a training home. The youngest child, Maria, remained in the family home with William. His family sought admission to WSS care, because the stepmother was afraid that he would 'come to a bad end, unless taken in hand'. She stated that he was 'given to wandering, stays out all night frequently' and feared that 'he is given to pilfering, bad language, and smoking'.[79] The stepmother's account of William's behaviour was particularly critical. She may have been exasperated by attempts to control him and genuinely feared for his future; equally, she may have been keen to dispose of a behaviourally challenging boy by seeking his admission to the institution.

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[76] WSS case file 9445, letter from Lily A. to matron at Sunnyside Home, Winchester, Jan. 1911.

[77] WSS case file 9445, letter from Lily A. to matron at Sunnyside Home, Winchester, Jan. 1911.

[78] WSS case file 9676, application form to WSS, May 1905.

The application thus painted the family as undesirable: the father had evidently failed to raise his children adequately, demonstrated by Harriet's escape from the family home and the welfare intervention that had 'rescued' Julia. William's continued contact with his father and stepmother while in the institution was very unlikely to be desirable or beneficial from the Society's perspective. There is no indication, however, in the case record of deliberate efforts to restrict contact. Upon admission, William articulated his eagerness to be trained in gardening and farm work and to emigrate to Canada to use these skills. This was fortuitous: William's emigration would resolve any difficulties that might be encountered in preventing William's exposure to his family's bad influence while in care. As such, he spent some time in the Society's St Aldhelms's Home, before being proposed for emigration in 1907. William's stepmother and father had chosen not to answer the questions relating to consent to emigrate on The WSS application. As a result, the Society sought familial consent from his family to facilitate his emigration in 1907: it is unclear whether the Society attempted and failed to get in contact with his father and stepmother, but correspondence shows that they sought consent from his uncle, who expressed his reluctance to approve William's migration. In answer to the uncle's response, The WSS stated that William had now reached the age of fourteen, which allowed him to decide his own future and to consent to his migration himself.[80] In February 1907, William signed his own consent form, 'being desirous to emigrate', and sailed for Canada in the summer.[81]

In 1910, his sister Julia, who had herself been taken into a different welfare organization, began a search to trace William, writing to the Society's Head Office in London, and then later to staff located in Canada. Within two months, Julia and William had been reunited through correspondence. William had told his sister that he was living with very nice people who had been a good master and mistress to him. Despite his acknowledgement that he was 'getting on very well' in Canada, he admitted that he 'yearns just a little for the old country'. No doubt, getting back in touch with his sister only exacerbated these feelings, particularly as they had been out of contact for many years, since both children had been removed from their family home by different agencies. William had indicated to her that he would save his money and try to return in the spring of 1911. Julia related William's plans to the Society, perhaps in the hope that they might aid his passage back to the UK given his homesickness. The Society instead advised her that she should encourage him to stay where he was, stating:

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[79] WSS case file 9676, application form to WSS, May 1905.

[80] WSS case file 9676, letter from WSS to uncle, 6 Feb. 1907.

[81] WSS case file 9676, emigration consent form, 26 Feb. 1907.

> Of course, the boy's wish to see his friends again is only natural, we have found from experience that when any of our boys and girls have returned to this country, in almost every instance they have regretted it and after spending a holiday in England, they have not always the means of going back to Canada.[82]

In spite of the Society's hope that William would remain where he was, he returned to England in 1911 aged twenty-one, when he reported to his old WSS home in Islington in November and again in December to enquire for assistance to obtain work, and stated that he was living with his sister Julia. The staff at the Islington home described him as 'comfortably clad' but advised they could not aid him until he first made contact with The WSS Head Office.[83] It seems that the Society referred him to the Church Army for support, but he absconded from their home two days after his admission.[84] Little is known about what happened to William after he left the Church Army Home, but notification of his sudden death from heart failure in Canada in 1933 suggests that at some point he had made up his mind to return to the country. He faced immediate difficulties in obtaining suitable work and may well have struggled to establish himself. Perhaps he was without a reference of good character or savings to tide him over. Given his admission into the Church Army Home, he was probably unable to stay long term with his sister and her family. Navigating and renewing family relationships could be complex work, especially for those who had lived away from home and biological relatives for several years: William had not lived with his sister since he was nine years old. Perhaps his experience of returning to London had not lived up to the nostalgic view for the 'old country' he had articulated in his letter. The difficulties he faced in re-establishing himself were beginning to undo his sentimental narrative of returning 'home' to the 'old country'. Despite his yearning for family and friends in England, the reality of once again being dependent on others and upon charity may have exacerbated feelings of discord and perhaps disappointment about his place in the world. Perhaps his attempts to reconnect with his sister had been problematic and did not provide him with the sense of belonging for which he had hoped.

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[82] WSS case file 9676, letter to Mrs H. Wilson, 29 June 1910.

[83] WSS case file 9676, letter from Islington Home to Head Office, 9 Dec. 1911.

[84] WSS case file 9676, letter from the Church Army to Edward Rudolf, 8 Jan. 1912.

Whether or not he remained in touch with his sister Julia remains unknown – by the time of William's death, she had herself been widowed but remarried and moved address.[85] When the Society attempted to contact her at her last known address to notify her of his death, the letter was returned to sender. The Society also wrote to Emmeline Neilson, an unrelated but local individual who had been interested in the children, helping to get Julia into a training home and supporting William's application to the Society. Although she had not seen Julia for nearly a quarter of a century and had not remained in touch with William, she expressed her grief to hear 'that my little friend Billy has passed away'.[86] It is probable that neither Julia nor William's other surviving relatives attended his funeral. A local newspaper reported that several 'Old Boys' from the Society's Canadian Home, as well as his former employer Mr Gee and his family to whom William had been particularly attached, were in attendance to celebrate his life.[87] While these friends were not family in a biological sense, they may well have felt like family to William. These bonds had survived for a number of decades and across great distances. It was these friendships to which William had chosen to return following his visit to England in 1911.

William's case demonstrates the complexity of the process of constructing, maintaining and remaking family bonds for children who had spent part of their childhood in residential care. The institutional family that William may have encountered during his time in care had some impact on his sense of social and familial relationships, and very likely his sense of self and belonging in the world. While there is no evidence to suggest that he sustained affective ties with any institutional staff members, William must have kept in touch with other Old Boys and been remembered fondly by peers who chose to attend his funeral. Additionally, he turned to the institution for further assistance when he found it difficult to find work on his return to England. The WSS's decision to support William's emigration suggests that staff were eager to discourage familial contact, but the institution, nevertheless, aided his reunion with his sister. William's subsequent return to reconnect with his family demonstrates the resilience of these bonds and the affinity felt by William and his sister, despite their long absence. Finally, who William thought of as his closest friends and family remains unknown. His renewed ties to his relatives may well have broken down by the time of his death, but it is clear that those who were able to mourn him, both in Canada and in England, were his friends who had known him as an Old Waifs and Strays' Boy.

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[85] Ancestry.com, *London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1932*; *1939 England and Wales Register* [accessed 6 June 2020].

[86] WSS case file 9676, letter from E. R. Neilson to Head Office, Aug. 1933.

[87] WSS case file 9676, *Sherbrooke Daily Record* (5 Sept. 1933), p. 5.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that family mattered to British children's welfare organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Far from adopting a blanket policy of prohibiting all contact between children and their relatives, major residential institutions such as Barnardo's and The WSS accommodated child–family contact in many cases. The relatives of children placed in institutions continued to care about, assume responsibility for, fight for and be anxious about the children with whom they had parted. Family members had a keen sense of their rights and entitlements to their relationships with children. The chapter has argued that welfare practices enacted within institutions were rooted in ideas of family life. With only minor variations, ideas about the institutional family permeated both the policies and practices of two of the largest and most significant British children's institutions. These ideas shaped children's experiences within the institutions in many ways. As evidence presented here shows, institutions encouraged children to imagine staff members and peers as familial figures in the institutional household. Published literature extolled their success in creating a family-like unit within the institution, even when children remained connected to relatives.

Meanwhile, individual care records and correspondence demonstrate that children and young people in care perceived ideas of family to be competing and complex. Nostalgic letters 'home' to the institution offer a window into former 'inmates'' acts of negotiating and making sense of their welfare experiences, interpersonal relationships and identity. They reveal how constructions of status, value and place in society were tied up with a sense of belonging and attachment to the institution. For many children, continued relationships with staff and peers, even when they returned 'home' to their relatives and friends, offered greater social capital and provided new avenues of support to master a range of difficulties encountered in later life. However, for some young people, association with the institution was a source of pain and conflict. Unpleasant and traumatic experiences within the institution meant that for some, their ability to cast off their ties with these agencies and to fashion a new identity could not come soon enough. Meanwhile, a sense of loss, desolation and confusion resound through the care records for some young people. They found it difficult to trace and emotionally reconnect with their relatives, to understand their past histories, to make sense of their self and identity, or to find their place in the world upon leaving care.

4. Child philanthropy, family care and young bodies in Britain, 1876–1914

Siân Pooley[1]

Adults in the early twentieth century had no doubt that the welfare of British children had been transformed in recent decades. They also thought that they were responsible for these changes. Historians know a great deal about the aims and actions of elite women and men who sought to alter their nation's future by remaking working-class childhoods. This chapter uses writing by working-class children to examine the impact and limits of investments in children's lives by the state, the voluntary sector and private families.

A rich body of scholarship has revealed how institutional initiatives expanded in scale, coherence and national reach between the 1830s and 1930s. Historians have constructed a coherent narrative of reform that grew from Enlightenment intellectual seeds and early Victorian evangelical roots into a many-branched tree of modern extra-familial interventions.[2] Across this century of action, working-class child welfare – unlike the welfare of children's parents or their wealthy peers – became a public concern suitable for benevolent and strategic investment.[3] This scholarship makes clear that child welfare was at the heart of British 'maternalist' politics for almost a century before these discourses 'intensified' during the Second World War.[4]

Social historians since the 1970s have questioned the altruism of middle-class philanthropists' motivations, highlighting the 'social control' that lay

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[1] The research for this chapter was funded partly by the British Academy, grant reference SG101041.

[2] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872–1989* (London, 1994); H. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society, since 1500* (Harlow, 2005 [1995]); G. S. Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (Westport, 2009).

[3] S. Koven and S. Michel, ed., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (London, 1993).

[4] L. King, 'Future citizens: cultural and political conceptions of children in Britain, 1930s–1950s', *Twentieth Century British History*, xxvii (2016), 389–411, at p. 393.

S. Pooley, 'Child philanthropy, family care and young bodies in Britain, 1876–1914', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 99–122.

at the heart of these initiatives.[5] For the last thirty years, however, scholars have also underlined the limited impact of providers' intentions and the quite different 'uses' that recipients made of eagerly negotiated resources. The 'survival strategies of the urban poor' depended on what Peter Mandler conceptualized as their 'social knowledge' of the rich.[6] Thus, Ellen Ross's pioneering research identified maternal 'information' as 'probably the single most important element determining access to' London's complex array of charitable and state relief. This knowledge, 'embedded in women's street culture', was essential in enabling a poor mother to be a 'forager' within the mixed economy of welfare. She understood middle-class goals and displayed 'herself and her children to best advantage', but ensured that gifts were 'distorted' to meet her household's needs.[7] Research into working-class families has developed Ross's insights to reveal the range of strategies used, also by fathers, to maintain their own 'respectable' morality and 'private meaning' in the face of regulation, whether from philanthropists, social workers or the disciplinary state.[8]

This chapter examines working-class children's 'social knowledge' of child welfare. The letters analysed in this chapter allow us to see not only how the young created, used, disseminated and silenced 'knowledge' of formal and informal welfare, but also how they interpreted its impact on their well-being.[9] As Ross pointed out in her study of the maternal relationship with charity, 'children, too, spoke, though they are not part of the story I have told here', and she refers the reader to adults' autobiographical accounts.[10] Memoirs offer powerful insights into the long-lasting emotional significance of welfare, recalled through the frame of the adults that children became. Yet, they are less sensitive to the minute practices of everyday life and to ephemeral perspectives that did not cohere with retrospective life-stories. Before analysing what children's testimonies reveal, we first have to understand why children's accounts of their everyday lives exist for these decades.

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[5] A. M. Platt, *The Child Savers: the Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago, 1969 [1977]); S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? an Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth, 1889–1939* (Oxford, 1981).

[6] P. Mandler, 'Poverty and charity in the nineteenth-century metropolis: an introduction', in *The Uses of Charity: the Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, ed. P. Mandler (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 1–2.

[7] E. Ross, 'Hungry children: housewives and London charity, 1870–1918', in Mandler, *The Uses of Charity: the Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, pp. 161, 166, 173.

[8] J.-M. Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 262; E. Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (Oxford, 1993); M. Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain* (Chicago, 2012).

[9] A. Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 40–2.

[10] Ross, 'Hungry children', pp. 186–7.

Childhood in the public sphere

The writing used in this chapter survives because of a short-lived moment when elite adults made working-class children prominent in the public sphere. When journalists introduced wholesome family supplements to Saturday provincial newspapers from the 1870s, they also pioneered the inclusion of columns for children. Editors sought to attract working-class readers and, thanks to the nineteenth-century expansion in elementary education, they knew that the young were more able to read – and especially write – than their parents or grandparents.[11] The pester power of literate children was co-opted by local newspapers as a means to attract an increasingly leisured and financially secure working-class family readership. Until the 1920s, their strategy paid off and weekly penny papers enjoyed the highest circulation figures outside of London.[12]

In contrast to most national children's magazines, a minority of local columns published large numbers of letters, stories, poems and drawings by young contributors.[13] The most successful participatory columns had a distinctive geography. Columns published from industrial districts of northern England were most enduring and sophisticated, and are the focus of this chapter.[14] They relied on a local readership with relatively adequate and reliable weekly wages.[15] In its turn-of-the-century heyday, the readership of Middlesbrough-based *Northern Weekly Gazette* stretched across north-east England, though readers also sent newspapers on to relatives across Britain and its colonial diaspora. Each week, the children's column received hundreds of contributions and filled up to six pages of print. Unlike most adult correspondence, newspapers seldom anonymized letters submitted to children's columns.[16] Biographical details allow each child's letters to be linked together, to those of their siblings and to household circumstances recorded in decennial censuses.[17] Censuses reveal that the majority of writers were aged seven to fourteen, with fathers who worked in manual employment.

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[11] D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750–1914* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 26–9.

[12] A. Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: the Provincial Press in England, 1855–1900* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 4–6; R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918–1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 503–8.

[13] S. Ash, *Funding Philanthropy: Dr. Barnado's Metaphors, Narratives and Spectacles* (Liverpool, 2016), p. 127; L. Brake and M. Demoor, ed., *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Gent, 2009), p. 111.

[14] These are part of a survey of participatory children's columns in: *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*; *Manchester Weekly Times*; *Leeds Mercury*; *Burnley Gazette*; *Burnley Express*; *Cotton Factory Times*, Ashton-under-Lyne; *Northern Weekly Gazette*, Middlesbrough; *Yorkshire Weekly Herald*, York; *Birmingham Post*; *Portsmouth Times*; *Western Times*, Exeter; *Bristol Times and Mirror*; *Glasgow Herald*.

[15] E. H. Hunt, 'Industrialization and regional inequality: wages in Britain, 1760–1914', *Journal of Economic History*, xlvi (1986), 935–66.

Adult journalists, most of whom used male pseudonyms, had the editorial power to create and curate this child-centred public sphere. The absence of unpublished letters makes it impossible to be sure how the column 'Uncle' or 'Daddy' selected letters for publication, but editors believed that they were at the mercy of young authors' decisions. Indeed, columns published in Bristol and Glasgow became dominated by letters from, respectively, upper-middle-class women and wealthy colonial children. These correspondents offered more educated and exotic content, further discouraging non-elite children from writing about their lives.[18] Young readers chose whether to invest time and resources in writing and determined what they considered newsworthy in their local environment. In this chapter, the 'social knowledge' revealed by the children's columns is explored through the sociologist William Corsaro's concept of 'interpretive reproduction'. Corsaro examined the ways in which 'children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns'. In contrast to didactic models of socialization, in these social worlds Corsaro suggested that 'children are not simply internalizing society and culture but are actively contributing to cultural production and change'.[19] Middle-class Victorian adults endowed childhood with novel public prominence, but children's responses created this social and intellectual world of print.

This chapter argues that children were central players in the expansion of public and private investments in child welfare in modern Britain. The first section examines children's engagement with the most novel welfare provision that originated beyond their household. Working-class children were passionate philanthropists who funded and promoted new children's hospitals. These children thought about fund-raising as a form of mutual aid, not class-based largesse. This child-led philanthropy allowed institutions to grow where there was a strong civic identity, but also contributed to the neglect of services and localities that lacked enthusiastic activists. Children's actions thus contributed to the geographical patchiness and inequities of institutional welfare. The second section goes inside the working-class household to examine how children negotiated welfare with parents and peers. Children commonly wrote about informal welfare provision in two contexts. Working-class children had a strong – but episodically articulated – sense of their household vulnerability. Children knew that their welfare depended on parents' ability to work in a low-paid patriarchal labour market and, when this failed, on an unpredictable network of adult kin. Additionally, a minority of child writers were preoccupied with bodily impairments that excluded them from their peers' trajectories. Children's self-narratives of 'weak' bodies highlight the new centrality of schools to childhood well-being after 1880, but also reveal profoundly gendered patterns of paternal or peer care work. Elite adults thought they were the sole authors of modern understandings of, and investments in, child welfare; working-class families and their children knew they were not.

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[16] The children included in this chapter chose to write about their lives for publication and using their own names, so none of them have been anonymized.

[17] All genealogical tracing used 'Findmypast', D. C. Thomson, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 1 Dec. 2019 – 31 Aug. 2020].

[18] S. Pooley, 'Children's writing and the popular press in England 1876–1914', *History Workshop Journal*, lxxx (2015), 75–98.

[19] W. A. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood* (London, 2011 [1997]), p. 20.

Institutional care

Studies of child welfare have been shaped by institutional archives.[20] Nineteenth-century philanthropic publications, minutes and case files are rich and alluring, as the chapters by Gillian Lamb and Claudia Soares in this volume indicate. It is also important, however, to assess the impact of institutional welfare using sources created and curated beyond the organization. The letters analysed in this chapter allow us to see how children interacted with medical and residential care, not merely as recipients, but also as philanthropists and promoters of extra-familial investments in child welfare. As the national birth rate fell from an average of more than six children for women who married in the 1860s to fewer than three children by the 1910s, children were increasingly likely to be growing up with only a couple of siblings.[21] It was in this exceptional demographic context that children formed new mutual and philanthropic associational networks beyond their homes.

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[20] A. Levene, 'Family breakdown and the "welfare child" in 19th and 20th century Britain', *The History of the Family*, xi (2006), 67–79.

[21] M. Anderson, 'The social implications of demographic change', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750–1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (3 vols, Cambridge, 1990), ii. 1–70, at pp. 28, 39.

Historians of philanthropy have long acknowledged the scale and breadth of charitable giving by middle-class children. Frank Prochaska devoted a chapter in his 1980 monograph to children's charitable work, particularly the evangelical missionary movement.[22] Over the last forty years, studies of juvenile philanthropy have substantiated his conclusions that the 'range of children's charitable activity was enormous' and the 'financial contributions of children can be found in virtually every type of nineteenth-century charity'.[23] Children's charities developed sophisticated 'promotional branding strategies' and 'mass print media' appeals, working through existing children's magazines as well as new specialist publications.[24] Provincial children described how large charities vied for their philanthropy, including through the competitive material culture of collecting boxes.[25] Late nineteenth-century children's columns also copied the successful strategies of national charities such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children by setting up societies with titles such as 'The Band of Mercy'.[26] Young members were encouraged to support charitable causes as part of pledges to, for instance, promote 'kindness' to 'all living creatures', but 'especially the very young, the ailing, and the old'.[27] Columns emphasized children's agency and sought to instil in children their duty – and power – to protect the welfare of those who they understood to be weaker than themselves.[28] The agency of the child was central to Victorian and Edwardian conceptions of the individual.

Children's philanthropic zeal was evident across northern England. Although adult column editors often suggested philanthropic projects, they only became a significant part of juvenile social worlds because of children's enthusiastic responses. 'Uncle Oldman' first mentioned collections for

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[22] F. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 73–94. See also: M. Elleray, 'Little builders: coral insects, missionary culture, and the Victorian child', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, xxxix (2011), 223–38.

[23] Prochaska, *Women*, pp. 73–5.

[24] K. Moruzi, '"Donations need not be large to be acceptable": children, charity, and the Great Ormond Street Hospital in Aunt Judy's Magazine, 1868–1885', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, l (2017), 190–213; Ash, *Funding Philanthropy*, pp. 2, 7, 118–47.

[25] *Manchester Weekly Times* (hereafter *MWT*, no page numbers), 1 March 1890; *Northern Weekly Gazette* (hereafter *NWG*), 22 Aug. 1896, p. 3.

[26] M. Flegel, 'Changing faces: the NSPCC and the use of photography in the construction of cruelty to children', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, xxxix (2006), 1–20.

[27] *Leeds Mercury* (hereafter *LM*, no page numbers), 19 April 1890; *MWT*, 2 March 1889.

[28] This included animals, see: F. S. Milton, 'Taking the pledge: a study of children's societies for the prevention of cruelty to birds and animals in Britain, c. 1870–1914' (unpublished Newcastle University PhD thesis, 2008).

Manchester's annual Hospital Sunday a month after he founded his column in 1886. 'Uncle Oldman' went on to describe his visits to the city's 'Hospital and Dispensary for Sick Children' using the conventional rhetoric of class-based benevolence. He painted a portrait of the city centre dispensary, founded in 1829, where 'the marks of suffering and illness were plainly to be seen'. On a visit to the children's wards, opened at Pendlebury in 1873, he added that 'They are all from really *poor* homes, and it is sad to think what would have become of them if there had been no place like this hospital to which they could be sent'.[29] 'Uncle Oldman' expected his imagined middle-class child readers to respond to the annual appeal for the 'relief of suffering among the sick poor' by donating their toys, clothes or 'pretty picture books' from their nurseries or 'you can surely spare something from your pocket money'.[30]

Some young readers were fluent in the practices and rhetoric of class-based benevolence. Nine-year-old Nellie Marsh explained in 1890 that 'I am so glad that I sent my dolly, for some poor little girl to make her feel happy.'[31] The following month her ten-year-old sister enclosed a donation of twenty shillings and explained that 'Sister Nellie has helped me to beg the money and we both feel glad to help the poor children'.[32] As daughters of a felt hat manufacturer in suburban Manchester who employed one servant, the girls had spare toys and access to adults with surplus money from whom to 'beg'.[33] Charities imagined that their donations came solely from comfortable children like the Marsh sisters. In 1891, the young readers of the *Manchester Weekly Times* donated £23, totalling more than one per cent of the annual funds recorded as maintaining the 140 in-patient beds and children's dispensary.[34] In a letter of thanks, the hospital treasurer explained that 'It is very gratifying to find so large a number of happy and fortunate children showing such helpful sympathy with those who are helpless and suffering'.[35] This language of philanthropy as a site of class distinction echoes the rhetoric used by national children's charities. Kristine

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[29] Emphasis in original. 'Manchester Royal Children's Hospital Pendlebury, 1856–1996', University of Manchester Library, Archives Hub website <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb133-mmc3-16/mmc/9/9> [accessed 2 July 2020].

[30] *MWT*, 13 Feb. 1886.

[31] *MWT*, 4 Jan. 1890.

[32] *MWT*, 15 Feb. 1890.

[33] Census 1891: RG12/3284/f.121/p.10.

[34] *MWT*, 23 Jan. 1891; 'Children's hospital Pendlebury annual meeting', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 23 Jan. 1891, p. 6.

[35] *MWT*, 30 Oct. 1891.

Moruzi revealed how stories designed to raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital 'highlighted the class differences between the contributors and the objects of their charity'.[36] Katharina Boehm drew on 'social control' arguments when she concludes that charitable work 'could be propelled as much by anxious wishes for class regulation as by commitments to improve the plight of Victorian London's ragged street children'.[37] It is impossible to know if precariously middle-class children such as the Marsh sisters were motivated by 'anxious wishes for class regulation', but – if they were – they were vastly out-numbered by donors whose charitable actions lead us to different conclusions.

Children's accounts suggest three correctives to conventional histories of philanthropy. First, class distinctions were not the primary motivation for working-class juvenile philanthropy. Mary and John Dennett were typical philanthropists in northern children's columns. Eleven-year-old Mary and ten-year-old John Dennett began writing joint letters in January 1890 about their desire to collect donations and organize a 'small "bazaar"' in aid of Manchester children's hospital.[38] The Dennetts' father was a tailor, living with his wife and four children in a three-bedroomed terraced house in the Lancashire industrial town of Wigan.[39] Class-based benevolence did not inspire their philanthropy, but the family worked strategically with the class distinctions that they lived with. When collecting money, Mary explained that 'Papa has marked out the "plan of campaign" for us', suggesting that his oldest daughter should be responsible for eliciting donations from Wigan's 'leading ladies and gentlemen', while her younger siblings would lead in raising money from 'amongst their own friends and working folk'.[40] The family conceptualized Wigan through a binary model of class that differentiated between a small elite and the masses, but they made philanthropy integral to reciprocal relations within their own class. The Dennetts believed that they – as children – were the ideal charitable workers whose time, mobility and persuasive power allowed them to stimulate support from across the local socio-economic hierarchy. Importantly, this model of mutual activism changed the rhetoric of children's columns. Instead of assuming class-based hierarchies, as 'Uncle Oldman' had in 1886, by 1892 he instead explained that 'children should help children' and 'a penny will fill up a corner'.[41] Children across northern England showed no interest in the welfare of other vulnerable groups, such as elderly or sick adults. Historians have long highlighted the role of philanthropy in middle-class civic identity formation, so that charity 'was a vital means of acquiring or reinforcing their symbolic capital and social position'.[42] Working-class children were aware of their class position, but their philanthropy instead constructed a 'social position' based on moral, civic and above all age-based identities. Children's humanitarian activism was prompted by the formation of a shared 'childhood' identity, rather than by the solidification of class distinctions.

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[36] Moruzi, 'Donations', p. 197.

[37] K. Boehm, '"A place for more than the healing of bodily sickness": Charles Dickens, the social mission of nineteenth-century pediatrics, and the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children', *Victorian Review*, xxxv (2009), 153–74, at p. 169.

[38] *MWT*, 25 Jan. 1890.

[39] Census 1881: RG11/3770/f.58/p.26.

[40] *MWT*, 25 Jan. 1890.

Second, the Dennetts' case highlights children's active role in driving philanthropy. The siblings described how they had co-opted their parents and peers in their fund-raising campaign. Mary explained that 'Mamma and I (Mary) and some of my friends are working hard making doll's clothing' while 'Papa will make up a lot of lucky packets' for a penny lucky dip.[43] Mary penned weekly updates before reporting the triumph of the bazaar, with stalls, games and banners including ' "Success to the Children's Hospital" '. The family raised '£4.9s.6d.' through 'our little endeavours in aid of suffering children'.[44] We would expect correspondents to emphasize their own influence, but the timing of fund-raising does suggest that familial action was sparked by reading the children's columns. The young used a wide range of tactics to gain control of household resources, and school-aged boys were as active philanthropically as their sisters. Ten-year-old Arthur Tom Nightingale, the son of a Blackpool joiner, explained that as well as collecting money from his school-friends, 'I went without sugar in my tea for two weeks, and my mother gave me 8d. which went towards the hospital fund.'[45] Arthur repurposed the abolitionist tactic of the sugar boycott to transfer money intergenerationally within his own household economy.[46] Historians of adult lives have assumed that children were their mothers' puppets; working-class mothers seeking relief knew that they should 'hide behind the ultimate natural dependent, the child' while in middle-class families 'the charitable pursuits of children reflected those of their parents, especially their mothers'.[47] Yet, column evidence suggests that children more often supplied the inspiration and energy, drawing their parents with them as necessary and skilled collaborators. Mothers did not simply bestow class identities as part of the domestic education of an obedient younger generation. Rather, in regions with newly founded civic children's hospitals, daughters and sons led a process of adult socialization, introducing their parents to new models of investment in children's welfare and innovative strategies of 'compassionate consumption'.[48]

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[41] *MWT*, 5 Feb. 1892.

[42] P. Shapely, 'Charity, status and leadership: charitable image and the Manchester man', *Social History*, xxxii (1998), 157–77, at p. 157.

[43] *MWT*, 1 Feb. 1890.

[44] *MWT*, 15 Feb. 1890.

[45] *MWT*, 22 Feb. 1890; Census 1891: RG12/3454/f.85/p.19.

[46] C. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: the British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London, 1992), pp. 35–40; K. Gleadle and R. Hanley, 'Children against slavery: juvenile agency and the sugar boycotts in Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxx (2020), 97–117.

Third, evidence from children's correspondence challenges the historiographical assumption that, under the 1834 New Poor Law, welfare moved away from a model of 'reciprocal' and 'lifecycle' relief towards sharply defined populations: the philanthropic, the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving poor'.[49] Young writers showed no awareness of these categories and instead conceptualized philanthropy as a form of mutual self-help. For instance, the Lloyd sisters joined the Dennetts in raising money for Manchester children's hospital, motivated by Harriet's own experiences of in-patient care. Nine-year-old Harriet wrote from the hospital's 'Lambe Cot' to explain that:

> Your letters are very interesting to many little children, but they are doubly so to me and my sister Annie, I (Harriet) having been an inmate of the Children's Hospital at Pendlebury for five months. At first I was a little afraid to go, but I found everything very nice and all the nurses were very kind. I spent last Christmas there, and everything was done by the nurses and kind friends to make us happy; all of us had several presents and Christmas cards which I prize very dearly. Since reading your nice letters my sister has collected ninepence, and now we would be glad to receive two cards, so that we may collect something for the cot.[50]

Harriet and her five-year-old sister Annie were the daughters of a warehouseman, living in four rooms in suburban Salford with their mother and baby sister.[51] Working-class parents were suspicious of new-fangled medical treatment, as well as critical of the quality of care provided by institutions beyond the home, especially if a child were 'delicate'.[52] As Harriet's testimony suggests, children were aware of this familial environment of fear. In narrating their experiences, children sought to demystify hospital care, emphasizing the presence of female nurses who were 'very nice to all who came near her' and wards 'full of presents'.[53] Correspondents with in-patient experience were explicit in using the column to undermine rumours that they had heard in their homes and neighbourhoods.

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[47] Mandler, 'Poverty', p. 22; Prochaska, *Women*, p. 94.

[48] S. Roddy, J.-M. Strange and B. Taithe, *The Charity Market and Humanitarianism in Britain, 1870–1912* (London, 2019), p. 4.

[49] For a summary: M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: an Economic and Social History of Britain 1700–1850* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 448–53, 493–5.

[50] *MWT*, 17 April 1886.

[51] Census 1891: RG12/3157/f.78/p.2.

Importantly, this juvenile educative mission extended to state-funded healthcare that was infamous for its stigma, including fever hospitals and workhouse infirmaries. Under the 1866 Sanitary Act, the poor could be forcibly removed to isolation hospitals and Graham Mooney has identified the practices of 'hidden coercion' used to regulate working-class households that were held responsible for spreading infectious disease.[54] Children were aware of struggles between public health officials and the public they sought to govern. For instance, Gerty Turnbull, the nine-year-old daughter of a Middlesbrough blacksmith, explained in 1896 that 'I write this, as children sometimes get a wrong impression of the hospital.'[55] Isolation hospitals were diverse local institutions, but up to four-fifths of patients were aged under ten.[56] Studies of mid-twentieth-century medical care, including the chapter by Maria Marven in this volume, reveal the emotional harm caused by spatial isolation and restrictions on visiting hours.[57] Before the First World War, children never mentioned these regulations, even in isolation hospitals, but instead highlighted how parents managed their distress when away from home.[58] Letters and parcels were essential to the maintenance of familial caregiving. In reassuring other children about the fever hospital, Gerty Turnbull recalled that 'Father and mother brought me a nice doll, and a friend sent me half a dozen little dolls which we dressed in the day time', with no mention of any disinfection procedures.[59] Although Gerty did not specify who the 'we' who played with dolls were, she did not present herself as isolated. Six-year-old Olive Ward emphasized visiting practices during her stay in Middlesbrough 'fever hospital' and explained that 'Mother came to see me twice a day. I was so ill'.[60] Middlesbrough isolation hospital later permitted window visiting, so it may be that this was how her mother, a widow with her own fruit and confectionary shop, sought to care for her youngest daughter.[61] Or, if face-to-face twice-daily visits were accepted within the turn-of-the-century isolation hospital, it is perhaps significant that the six year old underlined her and her mother's gratitude: 'The nurse was so kind. She came to our house and had tea with us. I got to love my nurse'.[62] In explaining how 'intrusive interventions' by public health officials became accepted by working-class families, Mooney speculated that it is 'probable that favorable reports of personal experiences in the isolation hospital got around by word of mouth, and the public's antagonism toward these feared institutions consequently waned'.[63] Children's letters provide evidence to support this hypothesis, but also suggest that children who survived and recuperated engaged in more conscious activism to promote hospital care to peers and parents. The subjects that preoccupied children offer important clues to oral rumours about institutional medical care. Given that the vast majority of professional medical care required parental support, child recipients played a crucial role in altering working-class cultures of healthcare.

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[52] L. Beier, *For Their Own Good: the Transformation of English Working-Class Health Culture, 1880–1970* (Columbus, 2008), pp. 264–309; S. Pooley, '"All we parents want is that our children's health and lives should be regarded": child health and parental concern in England, c.1860–1910', *Social History of Medicine*, xxiii (2010), 528–48.

[53] *MWT*, 27 May 1899; *NWG*, 31 Oct. 1896, p. 2.

[54] G. Mooney, *Intrusive Interventions: Public Health, Domestic Space, and Infectious Disease Surveillance in England, 1840–1914* (Rochester, NY, 2015), p. 70.

[55] *NWG*, 21 Nov. 1896, p. 3; Census 1891: RG12/4009/f.57/p.16.

[56] G. Mooney, 'Infection and citizenship: (not) visiting isolation hospitals in mid-Victorian Britain', in *Permeable Walls: Historical Perspectives on Hospital and Asylum Visiting*, ed. G. Mooney and J. Reinarz (Amsterdam, 2009), pp. 147–73, at p. 156.

[57] H. Hendrick, 'Children's emotional well-being and mental health in early post-Second World War Britain: the case of unrestricted hospital visiting', in *Cultures of Child Health in Britain and the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Gijswijt-Hofstra and H. Marland (Leiden, 2003), pp. 213–42, at p. 215.

[58] Mooney, *Intrusive*, pp. 85–8.

Other children testified to experiences in Poor Law institutions that the state had designed to be stigmatizing. Towns such as Middlesbrough lacked newly built paediatric facilities that cities such as Manchester enjoyed, so Matilda Rogers, the eleven-year-old daughter of a blast furnace labourer, was admitted in 1894 to a non-age-specific ward of the Middlesbrough Poor Law Infirmary.[64] She described how 'Day by day accidents were continually coming in, and this kept the nurses at work all day'. In spite of recalling that she was 'startled' by the injuries she 'witnessed', she underlined the 'clean appearance' of the ward and ended her letter by noting 'I liked to be in the Infirmary very much, and was extremely sorry when I had to leave.'[65] Matilda never explained what she missed about the Infirmary when she returned to her family home. None of these eye-witness testimonies were solicited as part of promotional initiatives, nor did the children show any knowledge of how state funding shaped their care. Rather, children's accounts of their interactions with the mixed economy of welfare unintentionally reveal the divergent experiences that funding gaps created; metropolitan children's experiences in paediatric charitable hospitals contrasted with sparse and over-worked Poor Law facilities nationwide. Most children showed no sign of accessing newspapers beyond their local column, so children's expectations were shaped by local experiences that were recounted orally and in print. Importantly, while nationwide charities were prominent in young minds, the nation-state was not. Children's letters showed no signs of noticing either parliamentary legislation to protect children or the implementation of celebrated policies such as free school meals or school medical inspections. As Jose Harris has pointed out, state expansion was 'piecemeal and unsystematic' and this meant that working-class children before the First World War seldom conceptualized their welfare as connected to the actions of the national government.[66]

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[59] *NWG*, 21 Nov. 1896, p. 3.
[60] *NWG*, 19 Dec. 1896, p. 3.
[61] Mooney, *Intrusive*, p. 89; Census 1891: RG12/4005/f.29/p.12.
[62] *NWG*, 19 Dec. 1896, p. 3.
[63] Mooney, *Intrusive*, p. 70.
[64] Census 1891: RG12/4015/f.123/p.15.

Young correspondents' silences are also revealing. While children praised medical care unanimously, correspondence written by children living in state workhouses or charitable orphanages seldom described – let alone evaluated critically – day-to-day life in non-medical institutions. Twelve-year-old Alex V. Martin in Darlington workhouse reported at length on a charitable 'tea' organized by a 'lady' where 'they threw sweets and nuts for us' and 'had all sorts of games'. He only added as an after-thought: 'When we got home we had nothing to do but change our clothes and go to bed. In the morning we got up and finished our work.'[67] Even this aside was unusual in providing a child's perspective on everyday workhouse life, unintentionally making clear the normally strict routines of having things 'to do' in the Poor Law institution. Working-class writers thus distinguished between types of investment; correspondents from poorly funded non-medical institutions had no desire to use their public platform to promote the extra-familial welfare they received.

Instead, children who lived in non-medical institutions focused on activities and relationships that allowed their lives to fit with those of children still living with families. A thirteen-year-old correspondent from Newcastle boys' orphanage was typical in highlighting his family and friends.

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[65] *NWG*, 19 Dec. 1896, p. 2.

[66] J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870–1918* (London, 1993), p. 218.

[67] *NWG*, 31 Oct. 1896, p. 2.

Fred Hall noted how he was 'enjoying myself very well' on his 'Christmas holidays' in Northumberland and sent a penny so that he might buy a copy of the Middlesbrough newspaper.[68] It is unsurprising that children in institutional care sought to make their self-narratives fit the social norms of columns that promoted models of fictive kinship and that were dominated by children who wrote a great deal about affective ties. It is interesting, however, that while children understood the lack of family and friendship to be stigmatizing, the receipt of relief was not. As a result, most working-class children publicized their experiences of both giving and receiving welfare. Twelve-year-old Charlotte Bontoft described benefiting from an organized outing to the 'seaside' at Scarborough, funded by charitable neighbours in her North Yorkshire village. Later in the same letter, she explained her role in helping her mother to provide a home for eight 'holiday children' who arrived each summer, sent in 'batches' from industrial Bradford and Leeds. From the 1880s, charities and local government sought to transform urban children's lives through access to 'fresh air'.[69] As the daughter of an agricultural labourer, Charlotte shared this rhetoric, explaining that for them it was 'so nice being in the country'.[70] Place thus replaced class as a marker of need. In another letter, Charlotte described raising funds for 'Dr Stephenson's Children's Home' while also feeling pride in receiving a 'beautiful book' as her own charitable Sunday School 'Christmas prize'.[71] Across northern England, working-class children made the charitable receipt of resources an unremarkable part of childhood, about which they wrote in public without any sign of embarrassment. Just as London mothers were 'foragers' for resources to maintain their households, children were omnivorous consumers of extra-familial resources, providing that they could show that their family and friends cared for them too.

Working-class children were essential to the project of public investment in children's welfare. Young correspondents across northern England used their privileged understanding of children's embodied 'suffering' to raise money for paediatric hospitals and to promote the use of institutionalized medicine as part of working-class healthcare. As Mandler advised in relation to charity in general, evidence from the children's letters reveals why historians should ‘scrutinize the assumption that dependence on charity carried a stigma for the poor’.[72] Working-class children were discriminating ‘experts by experience’, refusing to praise their life in children’s homes and ignoring the welfare of vulnerable adults. Yet, whether writing as recipients, philanthropists or reporters, another thread runs through children’s letters: the importance of peers, siblings, adult kin and, above all, parents.

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[68] *NWG*, 7 Jan. 1899, p. 3.

[69] L. Bryder, '"Wonderlands of buttercup, clover and daisies": tuberculosis and the open-air school movement in Britain, 1907–39', in *In the Name of the Child*, ed. R. Cooter (London, 1992), pp. 72–95; H. Barron, 'Changing conceptions of the "poor child": the Children's Country Holiday Fund, 1918–1939', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, ix (2016), 29–47.

[70] *NWG*, 23 July 1898, p. 2.

[71] *NWG*, 18 March 1899, p. 2.

Parental and peer care

The vast majority of investment in children’s welfare came from within working-class households. As economic historians have highlighted, we lack evidence for the intra-household negotiation of resources. Sara Horrell and Deborah Oxley’s quantitative analysis revealed the significance of ‘earner bias’ in determining the distribution of material resources, concluding that ‘bargaining occurred not just between husband and wife but also between adolescent children and parents’. As children’s philanthropy demonstrates, children who were not yet wage-earning adolescents were also able to ‘beg’ to divert money away from the household economy. This culture of ‘bargaining’ is beyond the reach of statistical evidence, and indeed Horrell and Oxley advised that further ‘empirical work on these historical households is required to understand the substructure of negotiations and the resultant outcomes’.[73] In this section, children’s letters offer a window into working-class households. By examining how children negotiated not merely money, but also time and care, we gain new insights into how children conceptualized their own welfare. This analysis suggests first children’s awareness of the vulnerability of their household welfare and second the importance of peer comparisons in forming new identities founded on bodily impairment.

Research into parenthood makes clear that adults were proud investors in their children’s welfare. When fathers and especially mothers expressed suspicion about institutional interventions, they were confident in articulating the parental prerogatives, time-consuming labour and individual expertise that meant that they knew how to care for their offspring.[74] Historians have learnt about children’s views on these intergenerational relationships principally through memoirs. A standard feature of working-class memoirs was the uncomfortable adult realization of the depths of their childhood poverty and the extent of maternal 'sacrifices'. Autobiographers recalled their mothers' efforts to maintain a clean home and to provide their children with food, even when it meant living without meals or with domestic violence.[75] Contemporary evidence from children's correspondence suggests that most of the time children took this age-specific parental care for granted. Children were silent in their letters about routine intergenerational investments of money, time and skill. Indeed, one ten-year-old boy, whose widowed mother had recently died, wrote to warn other children 'I am an orphan boy. I wish to tell the children to make much of their fathers and mothers.'[76]

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[72] Mandler, ‘Poverty’, p. 16.

[73] S. Horrell and D. Oxley, ‘Bargaining for basics? Inferring decision making in nineteenth-century British households from expenditure, diet, stature, and death’, *European Review of Economic History*, xvii (2013), 147–70, at p. 166.

[74] S. Pooley, ‘Parenthood, citizenship and the state in England c.1867–1914’, in *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe 1870–1950: Raising the Nation*, ed. H. Barron and C. Siebrecht (Basingstoke, 2017), pp. 25–48; H. Barron, ‘Parents, teachers, and children’s well-being in London, 1918–1939’, in Barron and Siebrecht, *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe 1870–1950: Raising the Nation*, pp. 137–59.

Yet, if we piece together letters longitudinally, a different picture emerges. This suggests that working-class children were – episodically – painfully aware of their household's precarious dependence on paternal breadwinning, maternal unpaid labour and the threat of poverty that loomed over their welfare. We see this best if we direct a spotlight on just one family. As well as being engaged in reciprocal philanthropy, twelve-year-old Charlotte Bontoft's frequent letters were speckled with signs that she knew of the fragility of her welfare. Her fears emerged when her 'father' fell 'so very ill' in winter 1897 and became unable to continue his work as an agricultural labourer and gardener.[77] The next letter noted with relief that 'my father is better, but not strong yet, but he is working'.[78] The 'breadwinner frailty' that Jane Humphries identified as central to autobiographical narratives was an economic fear that haunted writers in childhood too.[79] Charlotte knew that 'he is working' was the crucial sign, not of her father's recovery, but of her household's survival. When her 'mother was taken very ill' eighteen months later, Charlotte explained regretfully to the column that 'I should have written to you before now', but she had had no time for five weeks. Charlotte was aware that her freedom to enjoy the community of fictive kinship through the children's column depended on not being responsible for housework or care work. Working-class children narrated a relational sense of self that was preoccupied with family, not simply because of romanticized ideals, but because they knew how much their welfare depended on the flimsy bodily strength of adults who provided for them.

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[75] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 128, 137–46.

[76] *NWG*, 24 Oct. 1896, p. 2; Census 1891: RG12/4006/f.86/p.11.

[77] *NWG*, 19 March 1898, p. 2.

[78] *NWG*, 16 April 1898, p. 2.

[79] Humphries, *Childhood*, p. 125.

By tracing children's lives beyond their letters, the material and emotional significance of networks of kin investment that stretched far beyond the nuclear family becomes apparent. We learn from genealogical records that the adults Charlotte lived with and called her parents were in fact her childless aunt and uncle.[80] Her birth mother, father and some of her older siblings lived in a separate nearby cottage.[81] Her birth father had been an agricultural labourer, but became an 'invalid' in his forties, around the time of Charlotte's birth.[82] Charlotte retained her birth family's surname in official records, but she always identified herself in her own writing using the surname of her uncle.[83] Leonore Davidoff's research highlighted the significance of life-long sibling ties to middle-class welfare, but the concept of the 'long family' also helps us to understand how poorer counterparts supported each other during familial crises.[84] Children made extended kinship networks central to their assessments of their emotional well-being, not merely their material welfare. When Charlotte Bontoft's cousin died, after having 'suffered dreadful pain in her body', Charlotte noted that she 'was like a sister to me, and I loved her dearly'. When a six-year-old cousin died in an accident, she explained how 'very sad' it was. Charlotte's assessment of her own happiness was always relational; after this summer of family tragedies, she concluded 'I am sorry to tell you that I have not enjoyed my holidays.'[85] Fragile affective kin structures were the preferred means for managing family crises, including when they threatened to envelop the youngest and most vulnerable children, such as Charlotte in infancy.

Thanks to Victorian post and rail services, news of how people 'suffered' spread with unprecedented rapidity around kinship networks, leaving children with emotions that some articulated in print. It is not clear that the flexibility, fragility or significance of the extended family to children's welfare was novel in these decades, but we have sources that allow historians to see how working-class children made sense of its centrality. Indeed, the columns were part of this culture of kinship. For instance, when thirteen-year-old Charlotte's normally monthly letters had been delayed through her own illness, she explained affectionately to the column's 'Daddy' that 'You will think I have forgot you as I have not written to you this year; but I have not. I often talk about you.'[86] Familial death, injury and disease were the events that wrought the shape and duration of children's well-being; even if temporary, family crises made children aware of their dependence on the health, emotional ties and decisions of adult relatives. Vulnerability was essential to the experience of growing up working class.

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[80] Census 1901: RG13/4539/f.30/p.9; Census 1911: RG14/28988/SN42.

[81] Births 1886: Vol.9D/p.393.

[82] Census 1881: RG11/4811/f.38/p.9; Census 1891: RG12/3973/f.31/p.6.

[83] Deaths 1973: Vol.2D/p.1981.

[84] L. Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780–1920* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 108–32.

[85] *NWG*, 22 Oct. 1898, p. 2.

On top of this undercurrent of concern about familial fragility, children assessed their individual welfare through comparison with peers. Across northern England, this led one group of children with bodily impairments to identify themselves as different because of their additional needs. Thomas G. Cox, the son of a Northumbrian coal miner, was a frequent correspondent who was described in print as 'the little cripple boy'. The fifteen year old explained that 'I am just the same poor useless fellow as ever. I cannot keep out of bed long at a time now – about an hour daily.' The litany of growing inadequacies included the inability to write unaided. Thomas explained that 'As I cannot write myself now, I have got my father to write a few lines to you for me, to let you know how I am getting on.'[87] Narratives of 'affliction' held particular power in Victorian literary culture, leading Martha Stoddard Holmes to argue that adults' 'narratives of self were inevitably fashioned with reference to the melodramatic conventions that permeated cultural constructions of disability'. Charles Dickens' figure of 'Tiny Tim' was the ultimate 'figure of pure pathos, an afflicted, innocent child'.[88] The letter scribed by Thomas G. Cox's father hints at these literary tropes, but it is significant that every column reference to the pathos of the 'cripple' child was penned by an adult or within a fictional story, rather than by children making sense of their own lives.[89] Working-class children formed strong narratives of corporeal, social and emotional difference, but this evidence suggests that they grew from different roots.

Children's awareness of bodily difference intensified as their peers constructed a normative age-graded childhood identity defined by schooling. The nineteenth-century expansion in elementary schooling, including mandatory attendance from 1880, meant that adolescents expected to have grown away from the, often shaky and laboured, literacy of older generations. As soon as children became able to write, they ever-more uniformly introduced themselves through the standard they had reached. They wrote with frequent updates on their achievements. Ill and impaired correspondents aged over ten were most vocal about their frustration at their failure to make progress and gain autonomy. Joseph Shearer, the son of an engineman, penned a letter from his four-roomed home to explain that 'I am thirteen years of age, and in Standard II. I go to Iveston Village school. I have been very poorly a long time, and I can not attend school regularly. This is the reason I am not in a higher Standard.'[90] Patchy attendance meant that Joseph was still three standards below the school-leaving qualification in his County Durham neighbourhood, but comparison with his twelve-year-old brother heightened his self-definition through his illness.[91] Both boys wrote the following week to celebrate exam successes, when Joseph was 'put in Standard III' while his younger brother boasted that 'I am now in Standard VI.'[92] Children described impairment through the experience of confinement, stagnation and dependence. Through comparisons with peers' ever-growing autonomous activity, these children formed an identity around accumulating relative incapacity.

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[86] *NWG*, 18 March 1899, p. 2.

[87] *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 15 May 1880.

[88] M. Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Ann Arbor, 2004), pp. 96, 133.

[89] *LM*, 25 March 1882, 6 Aug. 1892; *MWT*, 15 Jan. 1921, p. 15.

While working-class children who emphasized their incapacity described physical or sensory impairments, wealthier children extended this language of comparison to intellectual deficits. Seventeen-year-old Rose M. dictated a letter that explained that she was a 'regular duffer' who her siblings called 'the odd one'. She noted that 'I am not like my brothers and sisters; they are all very clever in their undertakings and I am not.' The letter described her inability to 'write shorthand', to 'play any musical instrument' and to learn science or languages. Her lower-middle-class family valued secondary education, so she became painfully conscious of her limitations during her teenage years. Although Rose acknowledged that she could 'do any kind of housework', she defined herself through her inadequacies when compared to her six siblings, noting that there are 'so many can'ts among my list'. For most of the letter, it is not possible to distinguish Rose's voice from her scribe's, but after her uncle signed Rose's name, he added the aside '(actually) the useful one'. Rose's identification through incapacity had become the subject of family jest.[93] Historians have assumed that disabled identities were produced by state investment in special schools from the 1890s and the impact of expanding processes of expert categorization following the Boer War 'degeneration' scandal.[94] Yet, letters from across northern England reveal that decades earlier school-aged children articulated persistent identities founded in the sense of being 'not like' others. As turn-of-the-century children aspired to linear age-related progress, those who did not follow this route articulated a painful awareness of difference from their peers.

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[90] *NWG*, 24 June 1899; Census 1901: RG13/4674/f.73/p.9.

[91] *List of School Districts in England and Wales, with the Standards Fixed by the Byelaws of Each District. Revised to 1st March, 1895* (Parl. Papers 1895 [C.7695], lxxvi, p. 467).

[92] *NWG*, 1 July 1899, pp. 2, 3.

[93] *LM*, 2 May 1891.

Dependency was at the heart of these identities, but through distinctly gendered relationships. Boys wrote a great deal about their father's care. In a letter penned with an older sister, five-year-old Johnny Stubbs described how 'I have a lame leg, and when I go out I have to go on my crutches or my little tricycle dada bought for me.'[95] As the manager of a Middlesbrough music business, Johnny's father was wealthier than most correspondents' and could afford multiple mobility aids. He also sought out professional medical advice for his son, recording – unusually – his then seven year old's medical condition in the 1901 census's disability column: 'Lame from childhood. Hip joint'.[96] The special mention boys made of their father's care was, however, typical of boys' letters. Robert M. introduced himself by explaining that 'I am suffering from some trouble in my legs, and I cannot move about like other boys. The doctors say I shall get well some day, but that it will be a long time before I am able to walk without assistance. I try to be patient.' In comparison to younger boys, the frustration in adolescent letters is palpable. Yet, Robert was also aware of the need to 'try' to fight against feelings of inadequacy when comparing himself to his mobile peers, adding 'I am trying also to be useful, for my arms are not weak'. To counter his son's experience of being 'weak', Robert's father gave him an education in masculine craftsmanship. Robert explained that 'a box of joiner's tools has been given to me that I may keep my hands busy'. He was 'busy now on a wooden doll, for my little sister', but noted proudly that 'father says that if Maggie won't have the doll because it is stiff, he will help me to make a big ship, and use the doll for a figure-head'.[97] Working-class men defined themselves through independent breadwinning, manual skill and physical strength, and boys valued their fathers' efforts to pass on those aspects of this masculine identity that evaded their impairments.[98]

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[94] For an overview of this scholarship: A. Borsay and P. Dale, ed., *Disabled Children: Contested Caring, 1850–1979* (London, 2012), pp. 3–11.

[95] *NWG*, 9 July 1898, p. 2.

[96] Census 1901: RG13/4581/f.193/p.28.

[97] *LM*, 25 March 1882.

[98] E. Griffin, *Bread Winner: an Intimate History of the Victorian Economy* (New Haven, 2020), pp. 62–85.

Fathers also showed awareness of the emotional impact of social isolation in boyhood. Not only was fifteen-year-old Thomas G. Cox's father his scribe, but Thomas described proudly how 'Father takes the *Weekly Chronicle* on purpose for me, so that I see everything that is going on' in the children's column.[99] Unlike the Stubbs family, the coal miner could not afford equipment to enable his adolescent son to leave their three-roomed home. He instead assured his son that he would bring childhood social life to his bedside. In practice, none of these breadwinning fathers could have been solely responsible for their sons' care, but boys placed particular value on the father–son relationship and chose to narrate these interactions in print.

Girls who defined themselves through their impairments did not mention paternal investment, but instead dwelt on the importance of care provided by other young girls. Nine-year-old Tilly Calvert, whose father worked in a Hartlepool forge, described how 'I go to school, and am in Standard I, but would have been higher, only I cannot walk like other girls.' Tilly's paralysis required her to be dependent on care haphazardly provided by her peers to get to and from the classroom.[100] She explained that 'I have a lot of playmates, who are very kind to me, and take me all over.'[101] Anna Davin used the concept of 'little mothers' to describe the caring roles of young Londoners, echoing the rhetoric of philanthropists who bewailed poor girls' premature maturity.[102] In their writing, however, northern girls did not compare peer care to motherhood. Instead, they made sense of care-giving through a language of friendship, expressed through emotional support as well as physical aid. Nineteen-year-old Rose Taylor introduced herself through her incapacity because 'I have had a stroke.' As the daughter of a widowed milliner, she focused on her inability to do manual work, writing 'I am not like other girls: I cannot knit or sew, for I have only one arm that I can use.'[103] Rose emphasized her dependence on 'a great many companions who call to see me and try to cheer me as best they can'.[104] While boys alluded to peer homosocial bonds that became fragile and distant due to disability, girls depicted friendships that strengthened through dependency. Care-giving was made integral to girlhood.

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[99] *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 15 May 1880.

[100] Census 1901: RG13/5636/f.183/p.5.

[101] *NWG*, 6 May 1899, p. 2.

[102] A. Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870–1914* (London, 1996), pp. 97–111.

[103] Census 1891: RG12/2574/f.120/p.26.

[104] *NWG*, 14 May 1898, p. 3; 16 July 1898, p. 2.

Indeed, working-class parents' attention to the needs of the 'suffering' child disempowered their other daughters. Letters from girls whose parents expected them to care for their 'weak' siblings described a quiet sense of injustice. The twelve-year-old daughter of a railway worker explained that she had no free time during the summer because 'I had to take my little lame sister out every day and night with it being so fine.'[105] Polly Sturdy's 'little lame sister' was only two years her junior, but Polly made clear that the health-endowing outings were demanding labour, not merely play. It was not until mid-September that she wrote with relief of the return of some free time because 'It is Saturday, and it is rainy, so I thought I would write'.[106] Just as disabled boys' self-narratives marginalized care by anyone other than fathers, girls seldom wrote about parental investment. Yet Polly's reference to the pressure that she 'had to take' her sister out implies her parents' efforts to invest resources disproportionately in the life of her 'lame' sister. Importantly, young writers showed no signs that they felt able to 'bargain' to alter parents' decisions or to challenge the intergenerational power dynamics with which they lived.

Conclusion

The project of 'child saving' was not the preserve of either adults or the middle classes. Working-class parents knew that they were the principal providers for children's welfare. Everyday money, time, expertise and networks of kin maintained a household, but late nineteenth-century fathers as well as mothers were proud of the additional care they provided to children identified as 'weak'. We need to rewrite our histories of child welfare to include parents as central actors, not merely impediments, in expanding specialist investment in the lives of the young.

'Weak' children were well aware of their unique household status. Children's letters suggest that this identity strengthened rapidly from 1880, as compulsory age-related schooling made children painfully conscious of their inadequacies compared to peers. Gendered patterns of dependence, on either fathers or female peers, heightened this sense of difference. This evidence suggests that a disabled identity in childhood was thus not primarily the adult-authored product either of literary tropes or of expert categorization. Rather, children's interactions with peers through schooling and associational life (including through the social world of print) created new age-defined norms that made some children feel that their trajectories were inadequate. For the majority of child writers who did grow as they hoped towards autonomous achievements and social relations, periods of illness – their own, of siblings, or of parents – were the principal events that punctuated their lives. Histories of childhood have remained largely untouched by the corporeal turn, but children understood individual 'welfare' through comparing their bodily capacities to those of peers. These comparisons were gender- and class-specific, so that, for instance, only wealthier children extended the language of deficits to their intellectual abilities. Health – subjective and relational, mental as much as physical – is thus a crucial category of analysis for social historians of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain that has at least as much explanatory power as gender or age.

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[105] Census 1901: RG13/4585/f.154/p.35.

[106] *NWG*, 24 Sept. 1898, p. 2.

Children were not merely recipients of welfare, but also providers, philanthropists and activists. As friends and sisters, girls in particular provided crucial care for 'weak' siblings. Children felt that they had little power to challenge the intergenerational and deeply gendered power dynamics upon which households depended. This makes it even more significant that boys and girls alike did have 'bargaining power' when negotiating extra-familial investments. Children worked as sibling collectives to divert parents' money away from the household economy, but simultaneously sought out their own charitable gifts to bring resources into their household. Child philanthropy thus challenges the historiographical preoccupation with charity as a site of class distinction. Evidence from the letters suggests charitable work did crystallize identities, but, for most philanthropists, morality, place and especially age were at least as significant as class. Working-class children publicized their own experiences as 'suffering' children and used their privileged 'social knowledge' to respond to adult fears about new forms of healthcare. Children's collective actions also contributed to the local patchiness and inequities of institutional provision. Children were zealous promoters of local medical care, but residential institutions, whether funded by the state or charities, lacked advocates from among their residents. Children's experiences thus underline how truly mixed the 'mixed economy of welfare' was. The young did not distinguish between state and charitable providers, but instead made distinctions based on the quality of care they experienced.

Participatory children's columns, dominated by working-class writers, were a short-lived, provincial and contingent phenomenon. After the First World War, middle-class journalists continued to provide 'child-centred' content, but ceased to give a platform in local newspapers to working-class children's everyday experiences. Yet, these momentary 'imagined communities' prompt us to rethink the assumptions of Victorian literary scholars who have presumed the 'necessarily middle-class status of children who take the pen into their own hands: they must be literate and they must have access to writing materials'.[107] For forty years from the late 1870s, working-class children – clustered in particular geographical regions and when their family had sufficient income – had the literacy, resources, motivation and spaces in which to make their lives and views public. Attention to children's agency and peer culture are thus not merely 'mantras' of childhood studies, but are essential if we are to understand how children experienced welfare.[108] Although M. J. D. Roberts concluded that voluntary associations focused on 'moral reform' and 'active citizenship' had 'diminishing significance' after the 1880s, it was in these decades that this culture of activism flourished for the largest demographic group in Britain, working-class children.[109] Columns thus contributed to the creation of a distinctively child-focused culture of social reform that had profound implications for child welfare. Children believed they had influence and they used this power to make others – peers and adults alike – aware of their experiences of welfare.

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[107] C. Alexander and J. McMaster, 'Introduction', in *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*, ed. C. Alexander and J. McMaster (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 1–10, at p. 3.

[108] E. K. M. Tisdall and S. Punch, 'Not so "new"? Looking critically at childhood studies', *Children's Geographies*, x (2012), 249–64, at p. 251.

[109] M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 277–81.

5. ‘Everything was done by the clock’: agency in children’s convalescent homes, 1932–61

Maria Marven

Earlier you said that your convalescent home was like a concentration camp, will you tell me what you meant?

> Royston (1952, eight years old): Well, I didn’t mean literally, you know, just that it wasn’t, it was very stark and, em, regimented (pause). Oh, it was controlled, yeah, very controlling and everything was done by the clock, and, em, we were just processed along. But really, we were just like numbers to them – a job. There was no fun, em, just trudging along. But other times, well (pause) it wasn’t all bad, not really. You know, I was a bit of a live wire in them days, you know, a rebel, so they couldn’t keep me down! I can remember having fun and playing games, playing with the other kids. You know, really, we made our own fun. I’d say it was more like somewhere between Belsen and Butlins.[1]

In 1952, eight-year-old Royston was admitted to a convalescent home for two months while he recovered from surgery. He was one of the multitudes of children who were admitted to convalescent homes between 1845 and 1970. The great majority were working-class children who, it was believed, were in need of fresh air, good food and rest to recuperate from ill health and escape the corrosive effects of urbanization. Children’s institutional convalescence was part of a general mushrooming of voluntary healthcare provision that occurred during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Convalescent homes were sponsored by a range of individuals and organizations, but these can be broadly divided into six main categories: homes affiliated to a religious body; homes affiliated to a hospital; independently owned homes; homes owned by an existing charitable organization; local authority owned homes; and after 1948, National Health Service homes.

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[1] Royston, C31MM-R1. To maintain anonymity, all of the interviewees were assigned a unique identifying number and their names changed. Interviewees’ age and year of admission are detailed next to their name.

M. Marven, ‘“Everything was done by the clock”: agency in children’s convalescent homes, 1932–61’, in *Children’s experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 123–46.

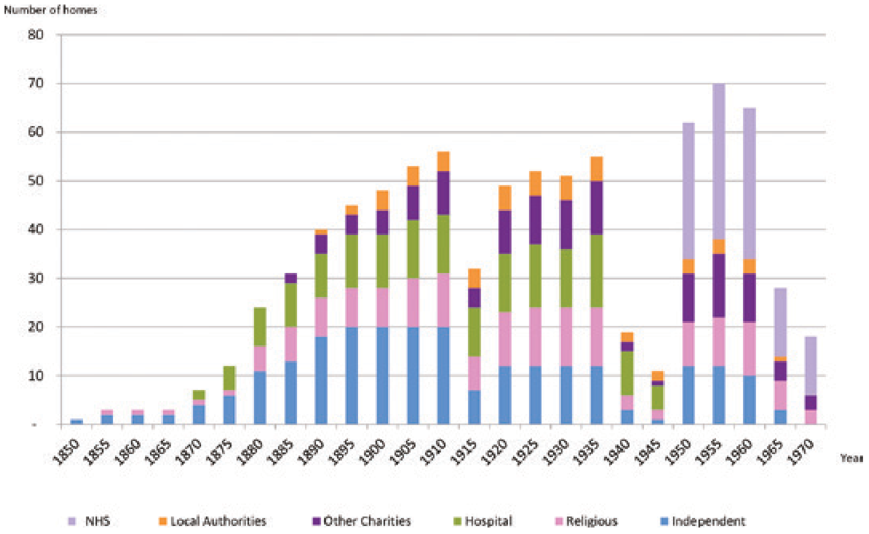

Figure 5.1. Number of convalescent homes that admitted London children by sponsorship type, 1850–1970.

Source: Data drawn from a number of directories: *Burdett's Hospital and Charities Directory*, *Church of England Yearbook*, *The Hospital Year Book*, *Kelly's Directories*, *King's Fund Directory of Convalescent Homes Serving Greater London*, *Low's Handbook to the Charities of London*.

The motivations for establishing and sponsoring a children's convalescent home varied between individuals, organizations, and over time. Sponsors were motivated by a number of factors that often coexisted, combining altruism, civic duty, religious obligation, self-interest and the objectives of the nation-state. As the motivations of sponsors evolved over time, so did the provision of homes. There were three cycles of expansion and contraction between 1850 and 1970, with two World Wars punctuating an overall pattern of growth between 1850 and 1955, followed by an eventual decline in the 1970s. Within each general growth cycle there were distinct differences in the growth patterns of various categories of homes. This reflected changes in the motivations of sponsors and their support for children's institutional convalescence (Figure 5.1).

Despite the durability of their association with children's healthcare, scholarly investigation of children's convalescent homes is sparse. Typically, historians have tended to research innovations in child health through the provision of community-based welfare clinics, domiciliary nurse visits and school medical inspections. The residential healthcare of sick children has received limited attention.[2] Work by Harry Hendrick has begun the process of turning the focus of attention towards children's hospitals.[3] His work explores children's experiences of hospitalization through medical case notes, doctors' reports and official documentation; unfortunately, these sources do little to uncover the experiences of sick children.

Broader historical research on children's residential institutions has demonstrated a wide range of provision and inmate experience. Much of this work suggests that these institutions shared a number of objectives. They sought to control and reform children who were perceived as problematic by society, including the poor, sick and disabled, commonly by their permanent removal from their familial homes.[4] The dominant interpretation of children's welfare institutions remains one of coercive, isolating and uncaring places, in which the discipline and punishment of children was often unnecessarily severe. Recent work has challenged this assessment and emphasized the extent to which regional contexts, subject populations and local officials varied the institutional experiences of children.[5] Yet, despite this rich historiography, individual experience and day-to-day institutional policies and practices have too commonly been overlooked.

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[2] For welfare clinics and domiciliary nurse visits, see: V. Fildes, L. Marks and H. Marland, ed., *Women and Children First: International Maternal and Infant Welfare 1870–1945* (London, 1992); H. Marland, 'A pioneer in infant welfare: the Huddersfield scheme 1903–1920', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine*, vi (1993), 25–49; L. Marks, *Metropolitan Maternity: Maternal and Infant Welfare Services in Early Twentieth Century London* (Amsterdam, 1996). For school medical inspections, see: J. Welshman, *The School Medical Service in England and Wales, 1907–1939* (Oxford, 1989); B. Harris, *The Health of the Schoolchild: a History of the School Medical Service in England and Wales* (Buckingham, 1995).

[3] H. Hendrick, 'Children's emotional well-being and mental health in early post-Second World War Britain', in *Cultures of Child Health in Britain and the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Gijswijt-Hofstra and H. Marland (Amsterdam, 2003), pp. 213–42, at pp. 219–21.

[4] S. Mumm, '"Not worse than other girls": the convent-based rehabilitation of fallen women in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Social History*, xxix (1996), 527–46; L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 164, 249, 252; L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006), pp. 1–11, 12–43; L. Peters, *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 8–9; S. Swain and M. Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 129–30.

[5] C. Newman, 'To punish or protect: the new Poor Law and the English workhouse', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, xviii (2014), 122–45; G. Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (London, 2009), p. 123; J. Hamlett, L. Hoskins and R. Preston, ed., *Residential Institutions in Britain, 1725–1970* (London, 2013); J. Hamlett and L. Hoskins, 'Comfort in small things? Clothing, control and agency in county lunatic asylums in nineteenth- and

Since Roy Porter's call to study history from below, historians have turned to new methods of analysis to study the subjective experiences of the non-hegemonic classes and subaltern groups. However, the voices of child patients have remained persistently silent. This chapter uses the remembered experiences of institutional convalescence as a prism through which to view children's subjective experiences of healthcare. The close examination of fifty-three oral history interviews with individuals who had been admitted to convalescent homes between 1932 and 1961 allows those who experienced convalescence to be the central figures of this chapter. All of the interviewees lived in the London area at the time of their admission and characterized themselves as coming from working-class families. They were admitted to twenty-four different homes for a variety of medical and social reasons, and they stayed on average for four months.

Alessandro Portelli argued that oral history requires specific interpretive instruments that are different to written sources.[6] The method of interpretation deployed in this study was to undertake an intensive analysis of each interview using psychologist Carol Gilligan's Listening Guide method.[7] The Listening Guide is a way of analysing qualitative interviews, drawing on the clinical methods of Freud, Breuer and Piaget. It is composed of a series of sequential readings, or 'listenings', that allow the researcher to uncover the varying voices of an interviewee. The Listening Guide is composed of four steps. The first step listens for the plot and the researcher's response to the interview. The second listening focuses on what the Listening Guide calls the 'I' voice, by following the use of this first-person pronoun, and constructing an 'I poem'. I poems pick up on an

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early twentieth-century England', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, xviii (2013), 93–114; C. Soares, 'A "permanent environment of brightness, warmth, and 'homeliness' ": domesticity and authority in a Victorian children's institution', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, xxiii (2018), 1–24.

[6] A. Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. R. Perks and A. Thomson (London, 1998), pp. 63–74.

[7] C. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Harvard, 1982). Originally designed for the analysis of contemporary self-narratives, it has been effectively deployed by Laura Tisdall to analyse autobiographies of children who were in long-term institutional care between 1918 and 1946; and by Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite to analyse a single oral history transcript collected by psychologists in the early 1980s. L. Tisdall, '"That was what life in Bridgeburn had made her": reading the autobiographies of children in institutional care in England, 1918–46', *Twentieth Century British History*, xxiv (2013), 351–75; F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'New perspectives from unstructured interviews: young women, gender, and sexuality on the Isle of Sheppey in 1980', *SAGE Open*, vi (2016), 1–11.

associative stream of consciousness carried by a first-person voice running through a narrative, rather than being contained by the structure of full sentences. In some cases, an individual's I poem illuminated a theme that was not directly stated by the interviewee, but was central to understanding what was being said. An example of this can be seen in an extract from the I poem of Chris, and sheds light on why he repeatedly absconded from his convalescent home, even though he was considered to be a mature, sensible child. Chris was admitted to a home for four months in 1950, when he was ten years old.

> I was the sensible one
> I can't imagine what possessed me
> I was quite advanced, mum said more than my brothers
> I knew what to expect
> I was with a small group of boys
> I didn't mind because I understood
> I was advanced for my age
> I explained to the others
> I went in first
> I was put into the hands of a nurse
> I tried to tell the nurses that
> I couldn't understand what was happening
> I didn't know what to do next
> I just remember this, an overwhelming sense of confusion
> I felt really lost
> I didn't know what to do
> I had a wobbly
> I ran
> I wanted to get away
> I just decided to run and so I ran[8]

The third step of the Listening Guide is shaped by the specific questions guiding the research. During this step, each transcript was read and simultaneously listened to, observing for a particular strand, or voice of the interviewee's remembered experience. Gilligan described this as listening for 'contrapuntal voices'. The final step of the Guide pulls together what has been learnt about the interviewee into a single analysis that can be used alongside their transcript. Taken as a whole, using the Listening Guide method facilitated a comprehensive analysis of all of the interviews that accommodated an awareness of subjectivities and composure of self-narratives.

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[8] Chris, C18MM-C1.

Colin's I poem illustrates that careful analysis of oral history testimonies can deepen our historical understanding of children's dependence and interdependence and how they exercised agency in a diversity of ways. By considering the various ways that children enacted agency, this chapter complicates institutional narratives that identify children as homogenous, subordinate subjects. Instead, it positions children's agency as shifting, negotiated exchanges shaped by age, context, relationships and cultural norms. Concepts of agency were conceived to account for the behaviour of adult, usually economically privileged, white males. Positioning children as independent social actors challenges historians to reconceptualize and broaden their definitions of agency. Mary Jo Maynes has observed that many of the ordinary understandings of agency and power simply do not apply to children.[9] She suggests that by critically engaging with definitions of agency, the importance of age as a category of historical analysis comes sharply into focus. In problematizing definitions of agency, this chapter rotates around the key foci of privacy and discipline. The first section explores the various ways in which institutional practices challenged children's privacy and provides a unique view of the cultural constructions of privacy. Children enacted privacy norms by deploying various behavioural devices to maintain their privacy; this provides valuable information regarding the significance of age to agentic behaviour. The second section examines discipline within children's convalescent homes. The institutional discipline of children who, for the most part, were not perceived as problems, provides a deeper understanding of social attitudes towards discipline than is available from current scholarship's focus on delinquents. The different modes of discipline used within convalescent homes, and their varying influence on an individual's ability to exert agency, draw attention to the pernicious effect of isolation within institutional settings.

Privacy

Historians have recently begun to pay attention to the place of privacy in history. Their scholarship has emphasized the experience of adults and we know very little about the meanings of privacy to children.[10] A richer body of scholarly work in the field of child psychology has addressed the privacy requirements of children.[11] Psychologists have suggested that how children conceptualize privacy increases in complexity with age and an associated growing appreciation of themselves as social objects.[12] In their oral history testimonies, respondents' understandings of childhood privacy, and the extent to which it was met, challenged or encroached upon was strongly influenced by their age at admission. However, there was not an age-related linear progression of privacy needs, moving from low to high. Instead, there were often seemingly contradictory representations of childhood privacy, particularly in the areas of toileting, bathing and emotional privacy. By exploring each of these areas in turn, it is possible to observe the complexity of children's privacy needs, and the extent to which age, context and relationships combined to influence an individual's experiences and perceptions.

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[9] M. J. Maynes, 'Age as a category of historical analysis: history, agency, and narratives of childhood', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, i (2008), 114–24.

[10] L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987) pp. 357–97; D. Webb, *Privacy and Solitude in the Middle Ages* (London, 2007); D. Vincent, *I Hope I Don't Intrude: Privacy and its Dilemmas in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2015); D. Vincent, *Privacy: a Short History* (Cambridge, 2016).

Attempts to maintain their privacy in the lavatory featured in the narratives of the great majority of interviewees. All of the interviewees were continent and able to use the lavatory independently at the time of their admission. Their familial homes had a variety of facilities consisting of: single household with outside toilet (28); single household with inside toilet (11); shared toilet with one other family (7); shared toilet with two other families (5); shared toilet with more than two other families (2); and a communal pot or bucket for night time use only (33). These various facilities were understood to be normal by respondents and usually only mentioned in response to a direct question. Conversely, lavatory facilities in convalescent homes and the difficulties they experienced maintaining personal privacy during elimination were proactively mentioned by eighty-seven per cent of respondents.

Their statements draw attention to a set of generalized, age-specific institutional regulations that governed children's behaviour in the lavatory and inhibited the amount of privacy they were allowed. Individuals aged seven years and under at the time of their admission recalled that they were required to use a potty, rather than a lavatory. Between the ages of eight years and eleven years, children were permitted to use the lavatory, but were required to leave the door open and were closely supervised by staff. Children over the age of eleven years were permitted to shut the door, but not to lock it or flush the toilet. Older children were also required to gain permission from staff before going to the lavatory and request paper if required. Interviewees believed that these requirements challenged not only their need for privacy, but also their sense of maturity and their age-related identity. Typical in this regard were the experiences of Anthony and Bertha.

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[11] R. S. Laufer and M. Wolfe, 'Privacy as a concept and a social issue: a multidimensional developmental theory', *Journal of Social Issues*, xxxiii (1977), 22–42; R. Parke and D. Sawin, 'The family in early infancy: social interactional and attitudinal analyses', in *The Father-Infant Relationship: Observational Studies in a Family Context*, ed. F. A. Pedersen (New York, 1980), 44–70; S. Petronio, *Boundaries of Privacy: Dialectics of Disclosure* (New York, 2002), pp. 73–5; L. S. Shapiro and G. Margolin, 'Growing up wired: social networking sites and adolescent psychosocial development', *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, xvii (2014), 1–18.

[12] Petronio, *Boundaries of Privacy*, pp. 73–5.

> Anthony (1950, six years old): [T]he nurses would open, bring out these steel pans, you know, potties … and arrange them in a grid (tapping table in a row) and then the children were assigned to a potty and, and as I recall there was no sex segregated, … they told us basically to get, em, undressed and to go into those potties. And when I was told what I was expected to do in a potty, I was shocked, really horrified and, em, I was too old to use a potty, I'd been going to the proper toilet for years. I felt humiliated, to have to sit like a baby, in the presence of all those other children, not just boys, but girls too! It was terrible, really terrible.[13]
>
> Bertha (1939, nine years old): [P]art of the system when a child went to the toilet, you couldn't close the door and the nun stood and watched you. And I found that a terrible experience, a real sort of, I was a very private person, I was, I was private, and I didn't want to see, them seeing me doing my business. (Pause) Another experience that sort of made it, at the time, painful.[14]

In common with all interviewees who recalled episodes in which their privacy was challenged, Anthony and Bertha narrated their experiences in the voices of despondency and anger. However, thirty-one of the respondents also recalled behaviour in which they sought to regain their privacy and exert control over their environment. When narrating these episodes, the voice of confidence came to the fore. The following extract from the testimony of Mavis illustrates the contrapuntal motion between the voices of despondency, anger and confidence. The counterpoint between these three voices demonstrates the complexity of children's agency. In many instances it was the emergence of the voice of confidence that drew attention to agentic behaviour that may have otherwise been overlooked, as it frequently did not conform to adult patterns of behaviour. Mavis was admitted to a convalescent home for six months, suffering from tuberculous glands and weight loss.

> Mavis (1936, six years old): I hardly know how to tell you this, but it's been on my mind, and I just, it was a horrible experience. And I still remember it so clearly. (Pause) We had to, em, use the potty, not a, a proper toilet, a potty.

[13] Anthony, C43MM-A1.

[14] Bertha, C2MM-B1.

> I remember that it was, em, in a very large room, with possibly, maybe ten other children, and I didn't want to take my knickers off, and it was just all very embarrassing. We were all sitting on potties, and we had to do what the nurses said 'Do your duty', I remember that phrase very well, 'Do your duty' (clears throat). And I remember trying to ask for the toilet, and getting so upset, very upset because I wasn't allowed. They wouldn't, they made me sit on the pot, but I refused to use it, because I was too old to sit on a potty, and well, to, to actually use it was (pause). So instead, instead I found a game that I'd play, a great game, it was a shiny floor and if I moved my feet backward and forward, I could slide over the floor, and I would try to move along the row while the nuns weren't looking. And gradually other children joined, and I would lead the way, but in the end presumably they did their duty because I was the last one left with the nun.[15]

Mavis' testimony demonstrates that children's agentic behaviour differs to that of adults, and may be embedded within other activities, including play. Sociologist William Corsaro has shown that children use play to both reinforce and subvert institutional rules, and, like Mavis, use communal play as acts of subversion and to build peer culture.[16] These modes of behaviour were also observable in the testimonies of older children, although they tended to deploy increasingly sophisticated modes of agentic behaviour. An example of this was the 'fainting game' recalled by Saul, in which a child distracted nursing staff by holding their breath and pretending to faint, thus allowing other children to 'sneak in [the toilet] without being seen' by nursing staff.[17] This game is interesting because there was an acceptance that not all of the participants would immediately receive the benefit of privacy, and children 'took turns to faint'. The complexity, trust and protracted nature of the fainting game demonstrates both the cohesiveness of peer group culture built through play and the degree to which peer group relationships supported autonomy and subversive resistance to authority.

Memories of play acts indicate that individuals used play to confront confusion and fears generated by institutional rules. Nine of the older children recalled singing or speaking very loudly to let staff and other children know that they were in the lavatory, or placing jumpers over their knees to 'preserve [their] modesty'.[18] This is what Corsaro calls a secondary adjustment, in which children use legitimate resources in artful ways to get around rules.[19] Interviewees who were approaching adolescence, although given the greatest amount of privacy, adopted the most direct approaches in securing their privacy. However, this was never overt confrontation with staff; instead, artfulness or deceit were commonly employed. Pam was admitted to a convalescent home for three months for the treatment of her 'nerves'. In her interview, she described her feelings of embarrassment and how she avoided asking for toilet paper.

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[15] Mavis, C1MM-M1.

[16] W. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood* (Thousand Oaks, 1997), pp. 147–52; W. Corsaro, *Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years* (Westpoint, 1985), pp. 301–15.

[17] Saul, C9MM-S1.

[18] Dora, C51MM-D1.

> Pam (1948, twelve years old): If you wanted the toilet you had to put your hand up and ask, and ask for toilet paper if you needed it. And I didn't like this, I thought myself too grown up, you see, and to put your hand up and ask, and, having to announce that you wanted the toilet *and* needed paper was, was very embarrassing, especially at that age, and, well it seems a silly thing now, but it wasn't then. I was very concerned about what people thought, and it was, em, embarrassing. … [T]here was ways you soon learned, ways round it, by taking the paper without asking and sneaking to the loo when they weren't watching (laughing), things like that.[20]

Respondents' testimonies indicate that they understood themselves to be active participants in securing their privacy, but they exerted their agency in many different, distinctly age-specific, and often oblique, ways.

New and different patterns of age-related behaviours were observable when children sought to maintain their privacy during bathing. Only eight respondents' familial homes had bathrooms; the great majority recalled a tin bath pulled into the kitchen and filled with water. Over ninety per cent of respondents recalled bathing at home between once and three times a week; only three respondents remembered baths as being rare events. For younger children, bathing was usually a communal activity with similar-aged siblings or even cousins. In some cases, this would be with members of the opposite sex, but in most cases there was strict sex segregation. Sharing a bath with parents was unusual. Only six individuals remembered sharing a bath with their mothers, while no interviewees remembered bathing with their father.[21] The practice of communal bathing stopped well before puberty, usually around the age of ten years, after which strict routines of privacy were enforced. These routines prevented family members seeing each other's naked bodies, regardless of relationship or sex. Typical in this regard was Ron's belief that his own mother did not see him 'without any clothes from roundabout ten years old'. Donna remembered getting undressed in the bedroom that she shared with her five sisters as being 'like doing the dance of the seven veils', as they all sought to preserve their modesty.[22]

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[19] Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, p. 151.

[20] Pam, C44MM-P1.

[21] David, C30MM-D1; George, C36MM-G1; Annie, C25MM-M1.

It was from within the context of strictly enforced codes of bodily privacy in their familial homes that forty per cent of respondents recalled nudity during bathing in convalescent homes as the most significant deprivation of their privacy, as judged by the number of times it was mentioned and the level of emotional distress recalled. Familial bathing routines were often held in contrast to the institutional nature of convalescent home bathing. But it was only respondents who had been older children, and had stopped sharing baths with their siblings, who believed that their privacy was intruded upon and objected to bathing with their fellow patients. The memories of Annie and Paul illustrate how they both found the bathrooms in their convalescent homes strange, but only ten-year-old Paul objected to sharing a bath with his fellow patients.

> Annie (1960, six years old): The bath situation was very strange, and I have this memory of not really knowing what it was at first. Because it was like a great big thing, they've got this big thing with all the sinks set around it, it was encased in wood. And then the baths, so many baths that were set into dark wood as well. We had a bath in the night time, (pause) I remember having baths altogether, the girls were separate to the boys like, you'd have a big bath, so you'd all go in and out of these baths, which resulted in much screaming and hilarity.[23]
>
> Paul (1953, ten years old): [Y]ou would all have to have a bath at the same time, you know, not separate, one after the other, but two or three in the bath at the same time, and then scrubbed down by a nurse. But I was, em, self-conscious and refused to get undressed in front of everyone. And, em, I remember that the bathroom area wasn't very nice, and the first time I looked, well, I had never ever in my life seen anything like, with all these baths lined up along the wall. So, anyway, I objected to this arrangement. I thought I was too old to share a bath, and I didn't want anyone looking at me in the noddy! So I refused, refused to get undressed.[24]

Annie's and Paul's testimonies demonstrate how privacy associated with bathing was age-dependent, and influenced by normative behaviour from respondents' familial homes. Older children who were accustomed to bathing separately viewed their bodies as private and personal. Consequently, they expected more privacy than younger children who were accustomed to bathing with their siblings or cousins. Unlike other areas in which respondents tended to assert their agency in oblique, non-confrontational ways, when maintaining their privacy in the bath, respondents were more likely to directly refuse to comply with staff requests. This may reflect the older age of this cohort, who were all over ten years of age, but their testimonies also indicate that it reflected deeply held beliefs that their bodies were private and should not be exposed to others. These beliefs were articulated in the voices of anger and confidence, and demonstrated by the I poem of Penny, who was admitted to a convalescent home for two months in 1958, at the age of eleven years.

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[22] Ron, C48MM-R1; Donna, C19MM-D1.

[23] Annie, C25MM-A1.

[24] Paul, C41MM-P1.

> I could see them all
> I thought what on earth?
> I was watching all this going on
> I didn't know where to look
> I was mortified
> I was confused
> I didn't know what to do
> I thought no
> I'm not getting in there
> I, em, just knew
> I could have died
> I thought no way
> I just knew
> I wasn't going to get undressed
> I said no.[25]

Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher have demonstrated the enforcement of strict codes of bodily privacy by English working-class parents during the first half of the twentieth century.[26] They also note a gradual relaxation of inhibitions between some mothers and their young children in the post-war years, an assessment also supported by the memories of six post-war respondents who bathed with their mothers as very young children. It is interesting then, that the interviewee statements examined for this chapter suggest that codes of bodily privacy governing pre-adolescent and teenage nudity were consistent across the period of study. This suggests that although attitudes to adult and younger children's bodies relaxed, attitudes towards the adolescent body and nudity were enduringly conservative. This observation supports the works of historians who argue that adolescence was viewed as a point in the life cycle associated with psychological turmoil, potential ill health and moral danger.[27] This historiography has tended to emphasize attitudes towards adolescent girls, but evidence from interviewees' statements indicate that the bodies of adolescent boys were considered to be equally at risk.

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[25] Penny, C10MM-P1.

[26] S. Szreter and K. Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate life in England 1918–1963* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 271–7.

On the other hand, the oral history testimonies presented in this chapter also indicate that understandings of children's bodies, bodily functions and associated privacy needs were more complex than can be accommodated by adopting an adolescent watershed model. The age-related privacy codes associated with bathing were at odds with the uniform expectations of privacy during toileting; the inconsistencies in expectations between these two contexts suggests that privacy codes did not simply correlate linearly with age, but rather, were age and context specific.

Memories of diminished privacy did not only relate to individuals' physical bodies; they also incorporated the need for psychological privacy. Scientific research has indicated that children's desire for psychological privacy is linked to their developing sense of themselves as individuals, and a need to achieve psychological autonomy by separating themselves from the people and things in their environment.[28] Consequently, although many respondents described the institutional environment and regimes as oppressive, only respondents who were over the age of eleven years at the time of their admission recalled wishing for psychological privacy. These respondents emphasized the erosion of their agency by strict daily regimes and their confinement within the authoritative boundaries of homes. The physical boundaries of convalescent homes were shaped by walls, gates and other barriers that limited children's freedom of movement and confined them within the institutional sphere of authority. This was at odds with the daily experiences of the majority of older patients who recalled playing freely in the streets around their home and in local parks. Mathew Thomson has noted that the culture of outdoor urban freedom continued into the later twentieth century. Pam contrasted the extensive freedom that she was permitted by her parents with the strictly controlled environment of the convalescent home.[29]

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[27] J.-M. Strange, 'The assault on ignorance: teaching menstrual etiquette in England, c.1920s to 1960s', *Social History of Medicine*, xiv (2001), 247–65; V. Long and H. Marland, 'From danger and motherhood to health and beauty: health advice for the factory girl in early twentieth-century Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, xx (2009), 454–81; H. Marland, *Health and Girlhood in Britain, 1874–1920* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 25–53; J. J. Brunberg, *The Body Project: an Intimate History of American Girls* (New York, 2010); K. Fisher and S. Toulalan, *Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present* (Basingstoke, 2011).

[28] J. Piaget and B. Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York, 1969); C. J. Weigel-Garrey, C. Cook and M. Brotherson, 'Children and privacy: choice, control, and access in home environments', *Journal of Family Issues*, xix (1998), 42–64; K. D. McKinney, 'Space, body, and mind: parental perceptions of children's privacy needs', *Journal of Family Issues*, xix (1998), 75–100.

> Pam (1948, twelve years old): It was different in them days, we played out in the street all the time, everyone did in them days, all down Burdett Road from Mile End to round Limehouse, and, we'd go on expeditions to the beach by the Tower of London, and there was proper sand, I don't know if there still is now, and that required a great deal of planning, jam sandwiches, bottles of drink. (laughs) ... I would go to Petticoat Lane, or sometimes Ridley Road [markets] just to have a look around. Em, or sometimes up West, to look in the shops. In the home you weren't allowed out, sometimes the nurse would take you out, a group of us down to the beach or into the town. But you weren't allowed out on your own ... In there [convalescent home] everything was done by the clock, same time every day, and the nurses watched what you were doing, (pause) you weren't allowed to breathe without permission. I found that kinda (pause), em, overwhelming, em, oppressive. I was, like, you were, there wasn't any freedom. There was a huge gate and when you arrived you drove through this huge gate and then through these huge oak doors, and it was like you, it was a bit like (pause) prison? [30]

In remembering the fencing, walls, gates and barriers of their convalescent homes, respondents demonstrated a present-day understanding of their purpose, stating that they 'were probably there for safety reasons', 'to stop small children wandering off', and to deter 'unwelcome visitors'.[31] Nonetheless, they clearly differentiated between their current understandings and their past feelings of confinement. Thus, the physical boundaries and strict daily regimes, like those described by Pam, prevented children from having time and space in which they were free from supervision. In her study of Australian orphanages, Shurlee Swain noted that children created private spaces in a variety of ways, often breaking or circumventing rules to escape the institutional gaze.[32] A similar pattern of exerting agency was described by the older children in this study, who recalled diverse ways in which they created private spaces in the supervised world of convalescent homes. Brenda described how, as an eleven year old, she would hide in her dormitory, and 'wait for all the other children to leave', so that she could

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[29] M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: the Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013).

[30] Pam, C44MM-P1.

[31] Martin, C3MM-B1; Theresa, C37MM-T1; Maria, C42MM-M1.

[32] P. Hewitt, *The Looked After Kid* (London, 2014); S. Swain, 'Institutionalized childhood: the orphanage remembered', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, viii (2015), 17–33.

'just be relaxed and daydream'.[33] John recalled making a 'forbidden climb' into the branches of 'an old tree and looking over the [convalescent home] wall', when he felt the need to be alone. Maurice also remembered climbing a tree, but he used the tree as a means of hiding 'out of sight, away from staff and watch[ing] what everyone was doing'.[34]

As well as exerting agency by breaking rules, six respondents also used compliance with institutional regimes as a means of achieving a private space. Jean described how she volunteered to help the nurses put away blankets so that she could 'dawdle, do what I wanted, my own thing'.[35] In this way, some children's compliance was an act of agency, as they consciously adopted behaviour patterns to exercise control and achieve their objectives. Boys and girls were equally likely to use compliance as a means of achieving their objectives, and similarly, both sexes broke rules to achieve privacy. Both modes of behaviour were narrated in the same contrapuntal voice of confidence; moreover, the emergence of the voice of confidence identified continuity of meaning in otherwise disparate and complex behavioural patterns.

To evade institutional surveillance and maintain their privacy during toileting and bathing, and to achieve emotional privacy, children frequently exerted their agency in ways that were oblique or contradictory or did not conform to traditional understandings of agency. Exploring interviewees' understandings of childhood privacy, and how they sought to maintain this in different situations, has demonstrated the influence of age, relationship and context on both their privacy needs and how individuals responded when these were challenged. The importance of these three factors in mediating children's responses and their ability to exert agency was also present in their experiences of discipline within convalescent homes.

Discipline

The constant surveillance experienced by children in convalescent homes, and the associated threat to their privacy, was part of a more generalized scheme of control and discipline that shaped their daily experiences. British attitudes towards the precepts and practices of disciplining children have been the subject of a varied and valuable body of historical research.[36]

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[33] Brenda, C53MM-B1.

[34] John, C17MM-J1; Maurice, C24MM-M1.

[35] Jean, C35MM-J1.

[36] S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth, 1889–1939* (Oxford, 1981); Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 120–42; H. Shore, 'Punishment, reformation, or welfare responses to "the problem" of juvenile crime in

Despite this rich and varied historiography, inmate experience and the day-to-day nuances of institutional policies and practices have too commonly been overlooked.

Children of all ages described episodes of discipline in which rules were enforced by nursing staff. In seventy-nine per cent of such cases, respondents characterized their experiences in predominately benign terms. This was especially so when rules were familiar to them and the actions of staff reflected their previous experiences of discipline. As such, most experiences of discipline were not conceived as remarkable or particularly different to that of their familial homes, schools or clubs. Some of the commonly cited examples of benign discipline included rules, such as no running in corridors, no fighting, no pushing, and taking medicine. In most instances, children acquiesced to these rules with no or minimal resistance. Typical in this regard was Patricia who described the daily administration of iron tablets.

> Patricia (1947, nine years old): I, em, always tried to avoid taking my medicine. I remember when I had dinner they used to come round and give me a tablet because I was anaemic. It was an iron tablet, and I remember they used to hide it in my dinner, and I can remember eating all round it. Then one of the nurses would notice and she'd shovel it straight in [my mouth] and then inspect to make sure it'd gone down.[37]

In common with other individuals who recalled these events as relatively minor, Patricia's characterization corresponded with experiences in her familial homes where taking medicine was a negotiated exchange in which she ultimately complied. Familiarity of experience appeared to increase the acceptability of rules, and Patricia considered the administration of medication in this way to be acceptable, believing that it was the 'job' of nursing staff to ensure children took their medicine.

The rule that interviewees recalled contesting most frequently was the requirement to eat all of the food that was served to them. The majority of respondents described the rule being rigidly enforced in their convalescent

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Victorian and Edwardian Britain', in *Punishment and Control in Historical Perspective*, ed. H. Shore (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 158–75; D. Thom, '"Beating children is wrong": Domestic life, psychological thinking and the permissive turn', in *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, ed. L. Delap, B. Griffin and A. Wills (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 261–83; J. Middleton, 'The experience of corporal punishment in schools, 1890–1940', *History of Education*, xxxvii (2008), 253–75; A. Wills, 'Resistance, identity and historical change in residential institutions for juvenile delinquents, 1920–1950', in *Punishment and Control in Historical Perspective*, ed. H. Johnston (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 215–34.

[37] Patricia, C5MM-P1.

homes. Chris recalled that staff 'made a big hoo-hah and song and dance about it, if you dared to leave anything on your plate'.[38] However, resistance and refusal to eat unwanted food were relatively common. As Helen's memories suggest, resistance was frequently covert.

> Helen (1954, eight years old): I remember once we had this stew, and I hated stew anyway, had never eaten it, and I didn't want it, but the nurse stood over me and made me eat it, and I heaved, I retched, oh. (pause) And then, I was eight and it was, to me, it was logical, I would put it in my mouth and then spit it out, drop it under the table and kick it away. Thinking, I suppose that it was going to vanish into thin air or something. But one of the nurses noticed, 'who's dropped their food?' I didn't confess, I was too frightened to own up.[39]

In addition to acts of covert disobedience, interviewees recalled engaging with benign discipline in ways that reflected their non-institutional behavioural patterns, including using play, singing and acts of daring that were intended to ridicule and subvert rules. The memories of Dorothy and Michael were typical in this regard.

> Dorothy (1946, nine years old): We would make up songs together, about the home and the nuns. I can remember one very, em, much more, she was a very lively girl and I think she was about, must have been a couple of years older than me. And I remember her wrapping a towel around her head, and I thought her very glamorous, and she'd, pretending to be Deanna Durbin, the singing nun, she'd sing (sung to the tune of the nursery rhyme *Frère Jacques*):
>
> *No more talking, no more talking – stand up straight, stand up straight.*
> Em, it was something about tripe for tea and then lights out, then
> *Say a prayer for Jesus, say a prayer to Jesus – God bless you, God bless you!*
> And it was something like that, and then we'd all join in with the chorus (laughing).

Did the nuns know that you sang songs about them?

> Of course not, no! If the nuns were around we were, em, quiet little mice – no more talking and stand up straight! (laughing).[40]
>
> Michael (1947, ten years old): [A]t night time we went to bed early, and the door was locked, we were locked in, when the lights went out you weren't allowed

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[38] Chris, C18MM-C1.
[39] Helen, C39MM-M1.
[40] Dorothy, C2MM-D1.

> to talk, and em, if you did speak and the nurses caught you, you got punished, but I don't know what sort of punishment because I never got caught, not to say I didn't talk (laughing) … But we also played dare, when you had to get out of bed, and it's pitch black mind you, and you had to get out of bed, touch the door handle and say 'London Bulldog', and if, if you did, you went up a peg or two, you know, with the other boys (laughing).[41]

Dorothy and Michael demonstrate the way in which various acts of agency were political in building peer culture. This was not unusual and interviewees' recollections of benign discipline and how they engaged with such discipline were consistent across the period covered by interviewee experience.[42] In their classic study *The Lore and Language of School Children*, Iona and Peter Opie noted that parody and acts of daring were ways that mid-twentieth-century children exerted independence without having to rebel.[43] Correspondingly, although interviewees recalled regularly subverting, or attempting to subvert, benign discipline, they simultaneously described complying with rules with minimal enforcement by staff and without any sense of distress. This was the case for Paul, who recalled that he was treated in a 'firm but fair way', and that 'there was loads of kids, so they needed to keep us under control, but they were kind ladies, and they didn't mind if we larked about a bit'.[44]

Despite most respondents recalling that their acts of disobedience were covert and that they eventually acquiesced, in many instances their behaviour also represented powerful examples of agentic behaviour. Rule breaking was not a purely personal action; it built peer culture and increased the political power of individuals within their peer group. This was the case for Frank whose memory of defiance elevated his status among his peers.

> Frank (1953, nine years old): You had to do as you are told. But I would sit there, and I would sit there forever, and there was always a nurse there patrolling, they would be monitoring what you ate, how quickly you ate it, no talking, eat up, clean your plate. I remember this one time feeling quite brave; one of the other children had said, the potatoes were like rocks, and they said 'You can't

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[41] Michael, C6MM-M1.

[42] Dorothy, C2MM-D1; Sybil, C55MM-S2. For a discussion of children's singing games, especially the role of mimicry, see: I. Opie and P. Opie, *The Singing Game* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 286–310. For a discussion of daring games, see: I. Opie and P. Opie, *Children's Games and Street and Playground* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 263–72.

[43] I. Opie and P. Opie, *The Lore and Language of School Children* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 86, 377–8.

[44] Paul, C41MM-P1.

> throw that potato across the room', and they were only little potatoes, but they were rock hard. I said 'I can', and lobbed it over the other side, very brave on this table of children. Silly experience but it made me feel brave, it gave me confidence that I defied the system (laughs). Anyway, so after that I was the King of the Castle, all because I'd lobbed a potato across the room (laughs).[45]

Acts of rule breaking that involved an element of daring were important in respondents' conceptualization of their own agency and power. As demonstrated by Frank's memory of becoming 'the King of the Castle', he was clearly aware that his childhood self had exerted political power, even though as an adult, he believed the act to be a 'silly experience'.

Just over thirty-five per cent of respondents recalled that they complied with rules to achieve an alternative objective. Chris described how by acquiescing to his weekly laxative medication, he used other children's resistance to his advantage.

> Chris (1950, ten years old): [T]hen once a week, a Wednesday, you knew it was syrup of figs day, we always had syrup of figs, if you needed it or not. We'd stand in a big, long line around the table upstairs in the bedroom, and they'd shove the same spoon, everybody had the same spoon, they'd just shove it in your mouth – it was horrible stuff! And then there would be some kids refused to open their mouth, or wouldn't swallow it, you know, all that. But, you see, I'd got it worked out, I soon realised that when we got dosed up with, em, syrup of figs it was also bread and dripping night. They put out jugs of hot milk or coco or malt, and bread and dripping, and I loved that, that bread and dripping was just lovely. (laughs) And you see, I was on to this, and I knew that I could get down there first if I had the syrup of figs quick.[46]

In narrating accounts of compliance and receiving some form of advantage, the voice of confidence came to prominence. In this way, some children's compliance was an act of agency, as they consciously used their consent to treatment as a form of exercising control. Moreover, for these children, giving their consent to an unpleasant treatment actually increased their sense of power and control.

Interviewees' recollections of benign discipline and the ways in which they engaged with such discipline was consistent across the period covered by interviewee experience.[47] Although resistance to rules was relatively common, accounts of physical punishment by nursing staff were very rare, with only three cases described by respondents. In comparison, ninety-six per cent of interviewees described receiving physical punishment from their parents, and seventy-two per cent recalled physical punishment as a common form of discipline at school. Low levels of physical punishment in the homes suggest an atmosphere of relative tolerance. There were, however, a significant number of events in which staff used humiliation as a form of discipline. Most of these events involved episodes of incontinence, usually nocturnal enuresis.

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[45] Frank, C47MM-F1.

[46] Chris, C18MM-C1.

[47] Dorothy, C2MM-D1; Sybil, C55MM-S2.

Historically, attitudes to nocturnal enuresis were intolerant, and punitive measures were believed to be an effective treatment.[48] Interviewee experiences reflected prevailing beliefs and attitudes, and many recalled 'treatments' that involved public shaming, washing their own sheets, having their noses rubbed in wet sheets and being left with wet bedding or in wet clothes all night. The testimonies of Jean, Rosamund and Annie reveal the strength of trauma experienced from such humiliating punishments, and provide poignant witness to its lasting effect on individuals.

> Jean (1938, eleven years old): And one night I remember coughing. I had phlegm and I was trying I was trying to cough it up, but I think it was all the coughing, and I wet the bed, and, em, (pause) I started to cry. And the night nurse came and pulled me out of bed, shouting at me, and made me stand in the bathroom for hours, in the middle of the night, till I'd dried out. (pause) Not something you want to remember.[49]
>
> Rosamund (1956, nine years old): I remember standing at the end of the bed with, em, a wet sheet that had stayed wet from the previous night, and hold it as a punishment, ah, with a nun being in her little room at the end of the dormitory until I dropped, until I dropped to sleep standing up, and they took it away from me, because that should teach the children not to wet the bed. But we've got it in our family, I think it's a bit hereditary or, em, it's just children, I don't know. Ah, I have obviously been through this an awful lot inside, to myself, so I'm not crying my eyes out, I'm crying inside, still crying inside.[50]
>
> Annie (1960, six years old): I wet the bed most nights and the nurses ridiculed me. They, em, (very long pause) they dealt with it by punishing me, em, they would rub my nose in the wet sheet (pause), and put a ribbon on the end of my bed, so everyone knew I wet the bed. (clears throat) The nurses were not very

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[48] 'The education of educators', *BMJ*, ii (1900), 1457; D. M. Odlum, 'Nocturnàl enuresis', *BMJ*, i (1940), 8–10; J. Malloy and A. G. Bodman, 'Enuresis', *BMJ*, i (1940), 108–9; I. Gordan, 'Allergy, enuresis, and stammering', *BMJ*, i (1942), 357–8; J. J. Michaels and A. Steinberg, 'Persistent enuresis and juvenile delinquency', *The British Journal of Delinquency*, iii (1952), 114–23; J. Crane, 'Rethinking how evacuees influenced post-war British thinking on health', *Retrospectives*, ii (2013), 22–41.

[49] Jean, C35MM-J1.

[50] Rosamund, C32MM-R1.

> kind to me, and those, those memories have stayed with me all these years, they don't leave you. Do you know that?[51]

In total, nine respondents recalled being punished for nocturnal enuresis; their ages ranged from six to eleven years old. As with other accounts of discipline involving humiliation, interviewees articulated a sense of injustice at their treatment. Their accounts were narrated entirely in the voice of despondency, frequently exhibiting signs of discomposure, moving backwards and forwards between events and in chronology. In recalling accounts of humiliation, respondents appeared to have been overwhelmed by their experience and unable to exert a sense of agency or power. Children's lack of agency was related to an overwhelming sense of isolation caused by humiliating punishments that divided them from their peers and undermined any sense of control. The following extract from the I poem of Martin recalls the experience of lining up to have his underwear inspected for marks, and demonstrates that in certain circumstances children appeared to have very little agency.

> I don't know why she did it
> I was told off loudly in front of everyone
> I think it was
> I had to show her my underwear to see if there were any, em, kind of, of skid marks
> I was eight
> I didn't have anyone to turn to
> I had a lot of marks
> I was humiliated in front of everyone
> I had to stand in a corner on my own
> I was told off a lot
> I've never mentioned this to anyone
> I just mention it to you because I was just a boy
> I remember crying
> I was crying
> I mean she just humiliated me in front of everybody
> I don't know what
> I didn't have anyone
> I don't know how I coped with it. Oh God.
> I just don't know.[52]

The total absence of power in Martin's account was typical of individuals' memories of discipline that involved humiliation – even among respondents who recalled acts of agency in other circumstances. Whereas, in most forms of agentic behaviour interviewees recalled building and drawing on support from peer culture, this support appears to have been dissolved by humiliation. In their studies of boarding school children, Vyvyen Brendon and Joy Schaverien have noted similar feelings of helplessness associated with humiliating punishments.[53] W. R. Meyer's study of day-pupils in Leeds has demonstrated that teachers who humiliated pupils were 'likely to lead to umbrage taking and protest' by parents.[54] This indicates that pupils informed their parents about humiliating punishments, and, as such, they exerted agency through their familial support network. Hence, the prolonged physical separation of children from their families in convalescent homes combined with the isolation caused by humiliating punishments rendered interviewees unable to challenge certain forms of discipline, even when they perceived them to be unjust.

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[51] Annie, C25MM-A1.

[52] Martin, C3MM-B1.

It is, then, significant that, in common with boarding schools, children in convalescent homes were separated from their families by distance and restrictive visiting practices. The continuation of restricted visiting by homes and the prolonged separation of children from their parents is at odds with the practice of children's hospitals that, influenced by John Bowlby's and James Robertson's work on maternal separation, had generally introduced daily open visiting for parents by the mid-1950s.[55] The explanation for the marked difference in policies between hospitals and homes is unclear, but entries in official records continued to stress the importance of providing children with fresh air, good food, rest and respite from the overcrowding and pollution of London, without discussing their emotional well-being. The primacy afforded to physical health over mental health points to an area of tension in children's healthcare, where new concepts and understandings of children's emotional needs and child psychology collided and competed with traditional ideas of childcare and medicine.

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[53] V. Brendon, *Prep School Children: a Class Apart Over Two Centuries* (London, 2009), pp. 141, 170; J. Schaverien, *Boarding School Syndrome: the Psychological Trauma of the 'Privileged' Child* (London, 2015), pp. 168, 16.

[54] W. R. Meyer, 'School vs. parent in Leeds, 1902–1944', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, xx (1990), 16–26.

[55] J. Robertson and J. Bowlby, 'Responses of young children to separation from their mothers II: observations of the sequences of response of children aged 18 to 24 months during the course of separation', *Courrier du Centre International de l'Enfance*, iii (1952), 131–42; J. Robertson, 'A two-year-old goes to hospital', Concord Video and Film Council (1952); J. Robertson, *Young Children in Hospital* (London, 1958), pp. 1–20; J. Robertson, 'Going to hospital with mother', Concord Video and Film Council (1958).

For a discussion of visiting policies on children's wards, see: Hendrick, 'Children's emotional well-being and mental health in early post-Second World War Britain', pp. 219–21.

Conclusion

As part of broader schemes of welfare reforms, children's healthcare provision changed during the mid twentieth century from that of a mixed economy of philanthropic and local authority sponsored endeavours to a central government sponsored National Health Service.[56] Yet, throughout this transition, institutional convalescent care for children was an enduring and accepted part of medical orthodoxy. Although aspects of children's convalescent care were often conceptually dynamic, the day-to-day experiences of child patients were remarkably stable throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This demonstrates that new understandings of child psychology did not permeate all areas of children's institutional care.

Interviewees' testimonies revealed that the significance of children's convalescence extended beyond its role in consolidating biological recovery, and generated acute and often long-term emotional responses. Enmeshed within interviewees' narratives were a number of events relating to toileting, bathing and discipline that occurred over and over again, from one interviewee to the next. The significance of these events to an individual was clear to observe. Their diffusion through the majority of testimonies indicated that they were essential to our understanding of children's experience of convalescent homes and institutional care more broadly. What was less clear was how a group of disparate events were related. An analysis of interviewees' testimonies using Gilligan's Listening Guide demonstrated that what appeared to be separate events were a chain of remembered experiences in which interviewees exerted or attempted to exert agency. The varying ability with which individuals exerted agency draws attention to the importance of age, context and relationships in children's ability to exert power.

Through the themes of privacy and discipline, it has been possible to interrogate episodes of childhood agency within an institutional setting. Children's power in their relationships with adult carers cannot be explained through a binary of adult power versus child resistance. Instead, children exerted agency in a myriad of ways, including negotiation, resistance, compliance, play and peer group activity. Moreover, respondents' testimonies indicate that they understood themselves to be active participants in exerting autonomy, but they exerted their power in distinctly age-specific ways that do not conform to many of the ordinary understandings of adult autonomy and power.

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[56] C. Webster, ed., *Caring for Health: History and Diversity* (Milton Keynes, 1993); B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800–1945* (Basingstoke, 2004); R. Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2005).

Resistance or compliance with institutional regimes was directly related to children's experiences in their familial homes. Experiences that were familiar to children were more likely to be complied with. Conversely, practices that were unfamiliar or perceived to be unjust were frequently resisted, albeit often covertly. And practices that contravened privacy norms were likely to be overtly resisted, particularly when associated with adolescent and pre-adolescent nudity. Although most memories of resistance were covert, they often represented powerful agentic behaviour by building peer culture and individual status. Peer groups were an important site and medium of childhood agency across the period covered by interviewee experience. However, disciplinary methods employed by staff that involved the use of public humiliation appear to have dissolved peer group support and resulted in a corresponding absence of agency. Respondents' memories draw into focus the pernicious effect of isolation and underscore the detrimental effect of the physical separation of children from their families. The significance of this observation extends beyond the study of children's convalescent homes and points towards broader experiences of children's institutional care in historical and contemporary settings.

For historians, the need to engage with subject populations on their own terms is a well-established tenet. However, the challenge for historians of childhood is to use methodologies that capture meaning that may be obscured by an adult-centric bias. While historians of gender, race and sexuality have done much to extend definitions of agency, questions of how children historically enacted power require yet further discrimination. Indeed, the oral history testimonies examined in this chapter suggest that there is not a single model of childhood agency; rather, there are many agencies that are age-specific, relational and contextual. As such, it is necessary for scholars to think about age in more complex ways, beyond the static or linear categories of childhood and adulthood.

6. 'The Borough Council have done a great deal ... I hope they continue to do so in the future': children, community and the welfare state, 1941–55

Jonathan Taylor[1]

Histories of the welfare state have predominantly been written from the perspective of adult experts. This chapter takes a different approach by constructing a social history of the welfare state which is primarily informed by essays written by school pupils, aged between seven and sixteen years old. These writings allow us to develop a better understanding of the personal impact of welfare interventions. This is particularly necessary because, as Mathew Thomson has noted, while 'historians have provided us with a nuanced history of the motivations behind the welfare state … we know far less about its operations in practice and at an individual and cultural level'.[2] Thomson concedes that his own work is primarily concerned with 'patterns of ideas' and 'pays relatively little attention to the story of individual children'.[3] This chapter considers the narratives of children themselves in order to 'reconstruct the way the world was seen from the perspective of the individual children who lived through it'.[4] Caroline Steedman's autobiography of growing up in London in the 1950s has often been held up as a rare glimpse of 'the emotional experience and personal meaning' of growing up during this period.[5] Steedman's observation that 'I would be a very different person now if orange juice and milk and dinners at school hadn't told me, in a covert way, that I had a right to exist', has often

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[1] I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Margaret Taylor for generously providing me with permission to include the photograph used in this chapter.

[2] M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: the Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013), p. 80.

[3] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 9.

[4] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 9.

[5] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 80.

J. Taylor, '"The Borough Council have done a great deal ... I hope they continue to do so in the future": children, community and the welfare state, 1941–55', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 147–73.

been cited as an example of how state welfare shaped working-class women's sense of self-worth.[6] The essays examined in this chapter allow us to assess prospectively the extent to which Steedman's experiences were shared by school pupils growing up in south London.

The introduction of the National Health Service (NHS) and reforms contained within the 1944 Education Act meant that children became some of the largest beneficiaries of wartime and post-war welfare reforms. It is much less clear, however, whether children growing up at the height of the Second World War either wanted or anticipated the reforms that were to come. To date, the most detailed examination of people's attitudes towards welfare reform relate to male members of the working class. Drawing upon a sample of responses to a wartime survey of attitudes towards welfare, Jose Harris has argued that working-class expectations were 'more modest and less ambitious than the reforms proposed later in 1942 in the Beveridge Plan'. Harris found 'little foreshadowing of Beveridge's demands … for the abolition of family poverty'.[7] Among those who did support increased state intervention, the expectation was that increased provision would come 'from Whitehall' rather than through an extension of 'existing local services'.[8] While Harris's work has revealed important ambiguities in working-class attitudes towards welfare, it is unclear whether these sentiments were shared by those who would benefit from age-specific services. Nor is it clear whether the modest expectations observed by Harris remained in place once the war was over. Taking serious note of the views of children growing up during and after the Second World War provides a far richer understanding of the changes discussed during the conflict and the reforms that were subsequently enacted. Three arguments are advanced over the course of this chapter. First, during the Second World War teenagers and older children were encouraged to share their opinions as part of wider efforts to strengthen their sense of civic responsibility. For this reason, historians need to acknowledge the views of teenagers and older children in order fully understand public interest in post-war reconstruction. Second, when understood from the perspective of children, the national state should be thought of as a much less influential provider of welfare than current histories of the period have implied. Finally, study of children's attitudes towards different welfare services reveals significant disparities in people's enthusiasm for reform, disparities that require us to rethink existing chronologies.

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[6] C. Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London, 1986), p. 123.

See, eg: A. Oram, *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics, 1900–39* (Manchester, 1996), p. 32.

[7] J. Harris, 'Did British workers want the welfare state? G. D. H. Cole's Survey of 1942', in *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling*, ed. H. Pelling and J. M. Winter (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 200–14, at p. 214.

See also: P. Thane, 'The working class and state "welfare" in Britain, 1880–1914', *The Historical Journal*, xxvii (1984), 877–900.

[8] Harris, 'Did British workers want the welfare state?, p. 213.

Essay collections

This chapter draws upon two collections of essays written by London schoolchildren twelve years apart.[9] The smaller of the two collections comprises twenty-eight essays that were written by teenagers, aged fourteen to sixteen, growing up in East London in the spring of 1942. This material has survived because of the actions of a woman called Miss Winifred Grant. Grant was born in 1895 and in the early twentieth century her family moved to West Ham where she lived for the next thirty years.[10]

In April 1942, Grant provided a representative of the social research organization Mass Observation (MO) with a series of compositions written by local pupils. Winifred Grant's MO diary indicates that her younger sister, Doris Grant, lived nearby and it is presumed that she worked as a teacher in West Ham. It has been inferred that the essays provided to MO were produced by Doris's pupils. Several weeks before submitting the essays, Winifred noted in her diary that 'D[oris was] very pleased with her boys this week. Says they are all trying hard. It has been up hill work as lots of them have had scant education for the last two years'.[11] The pupils' work was accompanied by a brief note in which Doris explained that 'the compositions were set in ordinary class-time without warning or preparation' and the writers were all aged between fourteen and sixteen.[12] Doris echoed the remarks recalled in her sister's diary: 'all these students have been handicapped by the terrible conditions of the 1940–1941 winters and/or by lengthy periods of evacuation; they are just beginning to pull up as far as the standards of work goes'.[13]

Unfortunately, the essays only provide the author's first initial and surname, making it difficult to determine their gender based on their names alone. Five of the essays have the word 'girl' inscribed on the top of the page, in Doris's handwriting, and it is assumed that the remaining twenty-three essays were written by male pupils. While neither Winifred nor Doris make explicit reference to which school the children attended, it is assumed that the students attended one of West Ham's five secondary schools that educated pupils beyond the state school leaving age of fourteen. Admission to each of these schools was by scholarship examination only. The number of free secondary school places in West Ham increased threefold between 1923 and 1939. By the time war broke out, the local authority provided 250 scholarships, divided equally between boys and girls.[14] Many more students, however, benefitted from reduced fees so that over the course of the inter-war period, between a third and three-quarters of new students attending West Ham's secondary schools paid no or reduced fees.[15]

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[9] Caroline Steedman was born in 1947 and grew up in South London. C. Steedman, 'Prisonhouses', *Feminist Review*, xx (1985), 7–21, at p. 19.

When quoting from the children's essays, pseudonyms have been used throughout.

[10] The National Archives (TNA), RG101/1012F/002/40.

[11] Mass Observation Archive (MOA), MO Diary, W. Grant, 1 Feb. 1942.

[12] MOA, 59/6/E, letter from D. R. Grant, 14 April 1942.

[13] MOA, 59/6/E, letter from D. R. Grant, 14 April 1942.

The West Ham pupils wrote an essay on one of three topics: 'What improvements should there be in the post-war world?' (answered by eighteen students), 'Relations between nations in the post-war world' (six students), and 'What part should religion play in the post-war world?' (four students). The questions asked of these pupils were consistent with a wider belief that young people's opinions should be valued and respected. Several months after writing their essays, Doris Grant's pupils held a ' "Brains Trust" in class'. This activity is likely to have been inspired by a popular radio programme of the same name in which the speakers responded to questions sent in by listeners. At its peak, the programme received close to 4,000 listeners' questions a week.[16] Writing in November 1942, Winifred Grant observed that her sister was 'agreeably surprised at the questions asked and answered' by the pupils who took part in the classroom discussion.[17]

Doris Grant's pedagogical actions develop arguments made by Melanie Tebbutt as part of her study of BBC Youth Broadcasts during the 1930s and the Second World War. Tebbutt has suggested that the decision to commission radio programmes such as the *Under Twenty Club* and *Start You Talking* 'reflected a belief among the progressive political classes that enabling young people's participation in the new public space of the radio would contribute to citizenship and a stronger democratic culture'.

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[14] K. L. O'Flynn, 'Post-primary education in West Ham, 1918–39' (unpublished Institute of Education PhD thesis, 1996), p. 127.

[15] O'Flynn, 'Post-primary education', pp. 220–2.

[16] P. Scannell, 'The Brains Trust: a historical study of the management of liveness on radio', in *Media Organization and Production*, ed. S. Cottle (London, 2003), pp. 97–112, at pp. 100–1.

[17] MOA, MO Diary, W. Grant, 23 Nov. 1942.

London's teachers actively promoted a culture that viewed 'young people as protagonists with valid voices'.[18] Indeed, Laura King has argued that 'the idea of children as future citizens … intensified in the conditions of wartime'.[19] Mary, one of the West Ham essayists, argued that it was 'absolutely essential that children should receive religious teaching' in order to ensure that 'the children that will be the rulers and voters of this country' are able to 'tell between goodness and badness'.[20] The teaching provided to Doris Grant's pupils and the content of children's essays indicates that teachers and pupils alike recognized that the correct instruction of children was key to the nation's future.

The second set of essays were produced by 332 children who lived in south London in the mid-1950s. These essays, which were written on the subject of 'All About My Neighbourhood', were created in response to an essay competition run by the Camberwell library service. The majority of essays appear to have been written in school and then submitted by teachers with the remainder written by children and submitted directly to the library. Pupils from twenty-eight different schools contributed to the project, including students attending Dulwich Village School whose class photograph is shown below.

The children who contributed to the essay competition were all aged between seven and sixteen and more than seventy per cent of all the submissions were provided by girls. The Camberwell essays contain much more information about the lives of the children who produced them. Nearly all of the essays include the name and age of the child, and the vast majority also include information about the school that the child attended and their home address. Camberwell's Chief Librarian later passed these essays on to Iona and Peter Opie, folklorists who pioneered the study of children's play. Compared to the West Ham essays, however, we know far less about the circumstances in which the essays were written and the amount of guidance, if any, the students received. Some of the essays follow a very similar structure which suggests that students in certain classes may have been directed to structure their writing in a particular way.[21]

The Camberwell essay topics were consistent with contemporary educators' belief that children should be presented with subjects that

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[18] M. Tebbutt, 'Listening to youth? BBC youth broadcasts during the 1930s and the Second World War', *History Workshop Journal*, lxxxiv (2017), 214–33, at p. 228.

[19] L. King, 'Future citizens: cultural and political conceptions of children in Britain, 1930s–1950s', *Twentieth Century British History*, xxvii (2016), 389–411, at p. 393.

See also: P. Cunningham and P. Gardner, '"Saving the nation's children": teachers, wartime evacuation in England and Wales and the construction of national identity', *History of Education*, xxviii (1999), 327–37, at pp. 332–4.

[20] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 21.

[21] Bodleian Library (BL), MS. Opie 36/2/75, 76, 78.

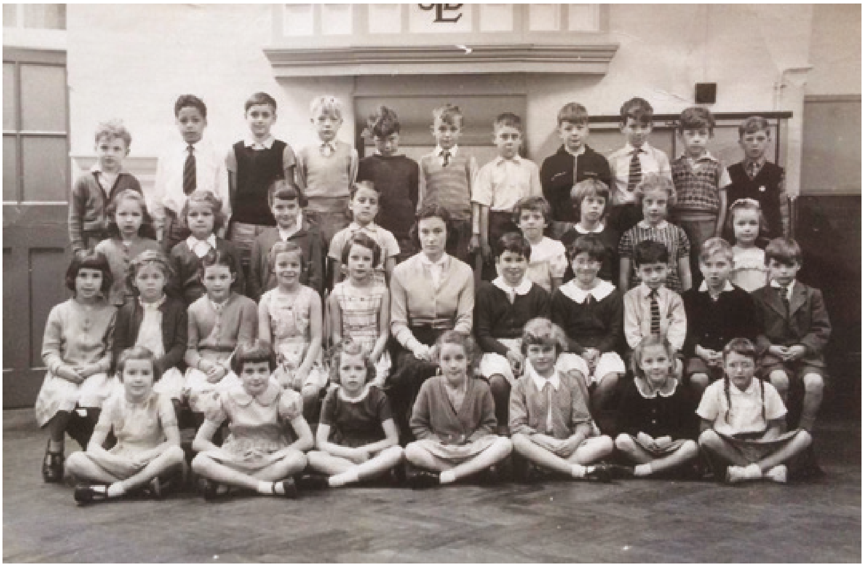

Figure 6.1. Mrs Taylor with her class of first-year junior pupils, Dulwich Village School, 1957.

Source: Private collection.

allowed them to 'draw on first-hand experiences' while still enabling the writer to release his or her 'inner creativeness'.[22] Steedman has argued that during this period 'a child's personal, creative, and autobiographical output was understood as the epitome of the process of growth through self-expression'.[23] In being asked to write about their neighbourhoods, participants in the essay competition were implicitly encouraged to reflect on their wider community and their place within this environment.

Neither set of essays is assumed to provide a mirror image of young people's attitudes towards the state or the way in which they believed welfare provision should develop after the war. They do, however, provide an invaluable starting point from which to explore the extent to which the modest expectations that Harris observed among her adult male working-class survey respondents were shared by girls and boys. The decision to centre this study on the writing of children builds upon the work of scholars such as

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[22] C. Steedman, 'State-sponsored autobiography', in *Moments of Modernity? Reconstructing Britain, 1945–64*, ed. B. E. Conekin, F. Mort and C. Waters (London, 1999), pp. 41–54, at p. 44; 'What is good children's writing? –Part I', *The Use of English*, iv (1952), 66–75, at p. 71.

[23] Steedman, 'State-sponsored autobiography', p. 52.

Claire Langhamer and Hester Barron who have shown that ‘a consideration of children’s writing’ can ‘offer an alternative lens’ on important historical issues.[24] Before examining the specific social problems that concerned the essayists, it is important to investigate the enthusiasm for reform among the West Ham pupils. Doing so allows us to examine whether Harris’s findings extend to young people who were still in education.

Desire for reform

Many of the West Ham pupils, whose essays were written in spring 1942, expected life would change in Britain once the war had ended. Pupils’ desire for reform was shaped by calls, within the popular press, for the government to commit itself to a programme of post-war reform. In 1940, Augustus Jenkinson, a Lecturer in Education based at the University of Manchester, published a book that examined the reading habits of twelve- to fifteen-year-olds. Jenkinson concluded that ‘newspaper reading is a well-established practice’ among boys and girls and noted that ‘newspaper reading tastes of adults and adolescents are remarkably similar’.[25] More than ninety per cent of all participants reported reading a newspaper on a regular basis. Roughly half of girls and boys of all ages claimed to read two or three newspapers, and this figure was even higher among grammar school pupils.[26] These findings are important because of the frequency with which the press discussed issues relating to post-war reconstruction. In 1942, an editorial for the *Daily Mirror* observed that ‘every day the public reads about plans for the future, post-war planning, planning for a better world’.[27] Post-war planning was also popularized in January 1941, when *Picture Post* published ‘A Plan for Britain’. *Picture Post* was one of the most successful periodicals of the war, selling more than 1.7 million copies of its bimonthly edition in 1939. The magazine was established in 1938 and its owner, Edward Hulton, supported a mixed-economy welfare state.[28] ‘A Plan for Britain’ comprised a series of short articles which put forward proposals relating to a number of issues including employment, town planning and education.[29] Hulton concluded the edition by arguing that: 'Youth is a force which can be the life spring of the state … in times of fundamental social change, such as the present, it is vital that our youth should be boldly brought to the fore'.[30]

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[24] H. Barron and C. Langhamer, ‘Children, class, and the search for security: writing the future in 1930s Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, xxviii (2017), 367–89, at p. 369.

[25] A. J. Jenkinson, *What Do Boys and Girls Read? An Investigation into Reading Habits with Some Suggestions about the Teaching of Literature in Secondary and Senior Schools* (London, 1940), pp. 89–90, 230–1.

[26] Jenkinson, *What Do Boys and Girls Read?*, pp. 89–90, 230–1.

[27] ‘For our seamen’, *The Daily Mirror*, 15 May 1942, p. 3.

[28] C. Seymour-Ure, ‘Hulton, Sir Edward George Warris’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2011).

Although none of the pupils referred to *Picture Post* directly, the publication's popularity, in combination with the similarities between its ideas and those found in the students' essays, means that it likely influenced some of the young writers.[31] Indeed, Paul Rennie has argued that technological changes in Britain's wartime print culture, of which *Picture Post* was a noted beneficiary, led to the expansion of photography and visual propaganda. Rennie credits these changes with 'play[ing] a crucial role in raising political consciousness'.[32] The publication's first editor, Stefan Lorent, sought to attract a diverse readership that encompassed 'the common man, the workers and the intelligentsia'. During the Second World War the role of editor was taken up by Tom Hopkinson who later commented that the magazine sought to 'influence events in a particular direction – that of a more just and equal society'.[33]

The principles of equality and justice are present in many of the West Ham essays. Robert began his essay by noting that 'after the war it is clear to most people that there will have to be a great many changes for the better in Britain'.[34] Robert's assumption closely aligned to *Picture Post*'s assertion that people were fighting for a 'new and better Britain'.[35] The end of the conflict was anticipated to provide an important opportunity to improve people's lives. George reflected that 'there is a great deal of talk nowadays of Post War Improvements and there will be much better living conditions'.[36] Some writers suggested that the war had heightened public awareness of the need for change.

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[29] J. Stevenson, 'Planners' moon? The Second World War and the planning movement', in *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War*, ed. H. Smith (Manchester, 1986), pp. 58–77, at p. 58.

[30] H. Hulton, 'Give youth a real chance', *Picture Post*, x (4 Jan. 1941), pp. 41–2, at p. 42.

[31] A post-war survey of secondary school children's reading habits reported that *Picture Post* was identified as one of the most popular weekly magazines among boys and girls.

See: G. G. Harrap & Co and W. H. Smith & Son Ltd, *Survey of Boys' and Girls' Reading Habits* (London, 1957).

[32] P. Rennie, 'Socialvision: visual culture and social democracy in Britain during World War II', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, i (2008), 243–59, at p. 243.

[33] C. Gorrara, 'What the liberator saw: British war photography, Picture Post and the Normandy campaign', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, ix (2016), 303–18, at p. 312.

[34] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 2.

[35] 'Foreword', *Picture Post*, x (4 Jan. 1941), p. 4.

[36] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 15.

John argued that the conflict had caused people to 'realise the necessity for a complete reorganisation and reformation' of society. John closed his essay by noting that 'the planning of such improvements is a great joy and comfort in such difficult times'.[37] The process of imagining a better future served as a source of comfort during the war itself. Planning's popularity goes some way to explaining the positive response which greeted the Beveridge Report which was published in November 1942.[38] The publication's findings were produced at a time when people sought comfort in looking to the future. The following year, during a debate in the House of Lords on post-war reconstruction, Lord Soulbury confidently declared that 'we are all planners now'.[39]

The West Ham pupils' enthusiasm for planning coexisted with a recognition that the process of reform could take a number of years. This view was also held by the editors of *Picture Post* who argued that it could take up to 'ten years' before their vision of a 'new and better Britain' was realized.[40] Robert, who believed that most people expected 'a great many changes for the better', acknowledged that 'it may be a number of years after the war before the work of making Britain a better country can begin'.[41] Others were more circumspect. David hoped that the post-war period would see the construction of new hospitals and the end of unemployment. David closed his essay, however, by noting that 'whether these improvements will come to pass in the post-war world, it remains to be seen'.[42] The doubt expressed by David likely reflected a wider fear, evident in several essays, that the post-war period risked sharing many of the same disappointments that followed the First World War.[43] These concerns were noted by the Home Office who in December 1941 reported that:

> There is evidence of interest being taken both by men in the fighting forces, and by civilians, in the problems of reconstruction … particularly with the remnants of the generation that fought in the last war; they remember the chaos that faced them when they returned home. These men are determined that their sons shall not suffer as they did, and many young men seem to have taken to heart the lessons of that period.[44]

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[37] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 26.

[38] N. Whiteside, 'The Beveridge Report and its implementation: a revolutionary project?', *History and Politics*, iii (2014), 24–37.

[39] Hansard HL Debate, vol 103, col 224 (9 Dec. 1943).

[40] 'Foreword', p. 4.

[41] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 2.

[42] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 25.

[43] See eg: MOA, 59/6/E, Essays 4 and 18.

[44] MOI Digital, INF 1/292, 'Home intelligence weekly report', no. 61 (3 Dec. 1941), p. 4.

The West Ham essays, in conjunction with the Home Office's observation that 'many young men' had 'taken to heart' the lessons of the last war, supports David Cowan's argument that Britain's post-war social democracy was in part the result of a 'generational experience that was … frequently communicated to younger people'.[45] The post-war welfare state was the result of intergenerational calls for change, rooted in part in a shared desire to overcome many of the problems associated with the inter-war period.

Having established that many of the wartime writers expressed a strong desire for change once the war was over, the remainder of this chapter examines three themes: living conditions, education and healthcare. These issues feature in both essay collections, thereby allowing us to consider the extent to which young people's views changed over time. Pupils' views on these subjects also enable us to reconsider longstanding historiographical debates about the extent to which the Second World War marked an important watershed in people's lives. These topics present a strong case for differentiating between different strands of post-war welfare state. In fact, children's expectations and experiences of post-war welfare differed considerably depending on which service they were evaluating.

Living conditions

West Ham's proximity to the London docks meant that it was heavily bombed during the Second World War.[46] Nationally, politicians anticipated that housing would become an important issue once the war ended. In September 1944, Lord Woolton, the Minister of Reconstruction, reflected that 'of all the problems facing on the home front, housing is the most urgent and one of the most important from the point of view of future stability and public contentment'.[47] Study of the West Ham essays reveals that young people shared this sentiment and also believed that the war provided an opportunity to rectify inter-war housing problems. These findings challenge Nick Tiratsoo's argument that the British public's attitude towards town planning was characterized by a 'distinct lack of enthusiasm' and support David Cowan's claim that 'many people' took 'an interest in the urban environment'.[48] Indeed, such was children's interest in reconstruction that pupils across the country took part in a competition to find the best ideas for post-war urban planning. The results of the competition were announced in December 1942 and the winners met with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Planning to share their ideas.[49] This competition stands alongside the BBC's wartime radio output as an example of efforts to strengthen young people's sense of citizenship and attachment to democratic culture.[50]

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[45] D. Cowan, 'The politics of the past in Britain, c. 1939–1990' (unpublished University of Cambridge PhD thesis, 2019), p. 8.

[46] E. Stockton, 'World War Two: from Hollywood to the Newham Archives', *The Historian* (2019) <https://projects.history.qmul.ac.uk/thehistorian/2019/05/16/world-war-two-from-hollywood-to-the-newham-archives/> [accessed 18 May 2020].

[47] P. Malpass, 'The wobbly pillar? Housing and the British postwar welfare state', *Journal of Social Policy*, xxxii (2003), 589–606, at p. 594.

The chance to use the war as an opportunity to address problems that predated the conflict was noted by Jane who observed that:

> it is in one way, a blessing that some of the houses in the slums have been completely smashed up or partly damaged by the bombing because it will have done some of the builder's work for them. There should be slum clearances all over the country, because houses being so near to each other always results in bad sanitation, dirt and diseases.[51]

Jane's reference to sanitation and disease was one of several instances in which pupils noted the influence that housing had on people's well-being. The construction of new homes was thought to serve the twin roles of rehousing people displaced as a result of the conflict and improving people's health.

Many of the writers suggested that problems associated with unemployment and poor housing conditions could be meaningfully addressed together. Edward believed that after the war 'the government … [should] start remodelling the towns and cities, thus employing those people who would have been unemployed'.[52] Robert singled out the 'filthy slums' as a problem that needed to be addressed: 'in a modern healthy post-war Britain these will have to be pulled down' in order to be replaced by 'large modern healthy buildings'.[53] Robert's expectation that post-war infrastructure projects would last 'a long time after the war' implied that future unemployment, of the kind observed after the First World War, could be averted. The proposals made by Edward and Robert are strikingly similar to those of Ernest Bevin who, as Minister of Labour and National Service, predicted three months after the children had written their essays that 'if large-scale unemployment is to be prevented … the rebuilding of Britain may need to absorb … as much as a quarter of the insurable population'.[54]

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[48] N. Tiratsoo, 'The reconstruction of blitzed British cities, 1945–55: myths and reality', *Contemporary British History*, xiv (2000), 27–44, at p. 38; Cowan, 'The politics of the past in Britain', p. 31.

[49] 'Schoolboys' post-war plan for their town', *Manchester Evening News*, 19 Dec. 1942, p. 4; 'Prizes for young planners', *Western Daily Press*, 19 Dec. 1942, p. 5.

[50] Tebbutt, 'Listening to youth?', p. 228.

[51] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 8.

[52] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 13.

[53] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 2.

The West Ham essays also provide us with a unique insight into people's attitudes towards the inter-war years. Several writers acknowledged that efforts to address housing problems had begun before war broke out. John, who expected that it would be many years before improvements could be made, noted that 'the abolition of slums was already making great headway in pre-war days' so that 'after the war, when many of these slums areas have been destroyed by bombs … steps should be taken to ensure that the buildings rising from these desolate areas are things of beauty'.[55] The inter-war period witnessed a dramatic expansion in house building. Local authorities provided more than 150,000 new dwellings in Greater London between 1919 and 1938, with a further 600,000 homes erected by private developers.[56] In 1933, West Ham council submitted a five-year programme of slum clearances to the Ministry of Health. This document recommended the demolition of nearly 500 houses and the construction of more than 700 new homes.[57]

A desire for continuity is also evident in several essays which discussed garden cities.[58] Welwyn Garden City was established in 1920 in an effort to address the country's housing shortage.[59] More than 20 years later, at the height of a second global conflict, several young people suggested that more New Towns should be built after the war. Richard believed that once the war had ended, 'towns should be reconstructed on the garden city principle'.[60]

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[54] Malpass, 'The wobbly pillar?', p. 596.

[55] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 26.

See also: MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 7.

[56] R. Dennis, 'Modern London', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. M. Daunton (3 vols, Cambridge, 2000), iii. 95–131, at p. 116.

See also: P. Scott, 'Marketing mass home ownership and the creation of the modern working-class consumer in inter-war Britain', *Business History*, l (2008), 4–25, at p. 6.

[57] 'Housing evils in West Ham', *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1935, p. 11.

[58] For a discussion of the history of garden cities see: Mass Observation, *People's Homes* (London, 1943), pp. 27–9.

[59] M. Clapson, 'From Garden City to New Town: social change, politics and town planners at Welwyn, 1920–48', in *Planting New Towns in Europe in the Interwar Years: Experiments and Dreams for Future Societies*, ed. H. Meller and H. Porfyriou (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2016), pp. 1–28, at p. 2.

[60] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 27.

George concurred and argued that in order to provide housing for people affected by unemployment, 'old houses should be pulled down, and new ones built on the style of a garden city'.[61] David Cowan's study of wartime Glasgow and Bolton found that place often informed people's attitudes towards post-war housing.[62] The popularity of garden cities among the West Ham pupils supports this argument, with Welwyn Garden City fewer than 30 miles away. The end of the war was anticipated to provide a valuable opportunity to change people's lives for the better. Planning innovations introduced during the inter-war period were expected to have an important role to play.

Housing matters continued to attract popular attention once the war had ended. A survey conducted in July 1949 found that women in particular considered being 'too slow with housing' to be the Labour government's most outstanding failure.[63] An article published by the *Daily Mirror*, a year later, noted that 'the shortage of housing is the greatest domestic problem facing the nation'.[64] By 1955, however, only a handful of children who contributed to the Camberwell essay competition (three per cent) remarked upon the continuing problem of urban slums. On the other hand, nearly a quarter of all pupils referred to the expansion of their community, of which residential construction comprised an important component. Eleven-year-old Anna closed her essay by reflecting on the changes taking place in her community: 'every day more and more things are made, more houses and flats are being built in Camberwell and I'm sure my neighbourhood will be one of the best of its kind'.[65] Local branches of government were often credited with overseeing these changes. Fifteen-year-old Gloria contrasted the old terrace houses with 'no front gardens' and 'basement rooms' with 'the Council Houses which have been more recently put up and have all modern conveniences'.[66]

The most extensive discussion of housing problems related to the district of Bermondsey, an area known for its poor housing conditions.[67] In 1955, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government estimated that more than

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[61] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 3.

[62] Cowan, 'The politics of the past in Britain', p. 39.

[63] 'Neck and neck to the election', *Picture Post*, xl (6 Aug. 1949), p. 34.

[64] E. Wainwright, 'Just try getting Charlie out of the garden', *The Daily Mirror*, 4 Oct. 1950, p. 2.

[65] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/132.

[66] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/197.

[67] 'New homes for London's poor', *The Observer*, 21 Feb. 1937, p. 10.

1,200 houses in Bermondsey were unfit for human habitation.[68] Thirteen-year-old Jane began her essay by describing the area's reputation: 'My neighbourhood is Bermondsey, some people call it the slums of London'. Jane, however, questioned whether this reputation was fair: 'I think they are decent houses compared with some that I have seen in other places. At least we have a back garden to hang our washing in and do not have to hang it across the street.'[69] It is not clear what area of London Jane was comparing to Bermondsey. Other parts of the capital were certainly more overcrowded. The importance that Jane ascribes to her family's 'back garden', however, is consistent with MO's wartime observation that people valued domestic privacy very highly.[70] Jane's essay demonstrates that children were prepared to challenge the stereotypes used to describe certain neighbourhoods.

Unlike the West Ham essays, none of the Camberwell writers connected the area's housing problems to the pre-war period. Given that the oldest contributors would have been younger than two years old when war broke out, we could not reasonably expect any of the writers to have personal memories of the inter-war period. The absence of *any* mention of inter-war housing problems, however – particularly when we consider that other aspects of the region's history were discussed – suggests that their parents and teachers omitted to discuss this aspect of the area's recent history with them. Overcrowding was a contentious issue in inter-war south London.[71] In 1933, protestors, carrying posters that read 'slums breed disease', threw stink bombs during a meeting of the Camberwell Council. The action was provoked by the council's perceived failure to clear the borough's slums.[72] A survey conducted by *The Observer*, in 1937, found that poverty and overcrowding were a notable feature of the north of the borough: 'here the streets are narrow, ugly, merely drab lines dividing drabber streets … a typical product of Victorian industrialism'.[73]

The small proportion of the essays that discussed housing problems reflected the considerable reconstruction efforts in south London during this time. In March 1949, the London County Council (LCC) announced a preliminary programme for the clearance of approximately 1,500 slum houses, with Camberwell identified as one of the priority areas.[74] Responsibility for housing was shared between Camberwell Borough Council and the LCC, a fact acknowledged in some of the essays.[75] Part way through her essay, fourteen-year-old Joan distinguished between the prefabs 'belonging to the Borough' and those belonging to 'the [London County] Council'.[76] Several pupils were clearly aware that their own house was council owned. Nine-year-old Linda began her essay by explaining that 'I live in a council flat in Dulwich.'[77] The matter-of-fact way in which Linda described this, and the lack of any follow-up comment, suggests that living in a council-owned flat was not viewed as particularly remarkable by Linda or her peers.[78]

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[68] Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Slum Clearance*, Cmd 9593 (London, 1955), p. 26.

See also: L. Wilkinson, 'Where is Mr Brady, mystery man of slums?', *Daily Mail*, 25 Nov. 1952, p. 1; R. Percival, 'Police probe mystery landlords', *Daily Mirror*, 25 Nov. 1952, p. 13.

[69] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/424.

[70] Mass Observation, *People's Homes*, p. 171.

[71] 'New homes for London's poor', p. 10.

[72] 'Council uproar over slums', *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 Sept. 1933, p. 11.

[73] 'New homes for London's poor', p. 10.

By the mid-1950s, London children were alert to the construction of new homes and considered them to be a positive development. Close examination of the pupils' work also suggests that by the 1950s, children, who were growing up in communities subject to wartime bombing, attributed the need to rebuild the nation's homes to wartime damage rather than problems which predated the conflict. This shift in focus is an important example of how the Second World War displaced memories of problems previously associated with the inter-war years.

Education

Many of the most far-reaching suggestions found within the West Ham essays relate to education. The issue was raised in ten out of the eighteen essays which discussed the improvements that the pupils wished to see introduced after the war. To date, historians have drawn upon the findings of a social survey conducted after the 1944 Education Act to argue that 'raising the school leaving age and [providing] equality of access' commanded widespread support. Study of the essays submitted to MO reveals that enthusiasm for changes to the educational system predated the government's plans for educational reform in 1944.[79]

Most of the essays that discussed education emphasized the need for greater educational equality. James was concerned that 'some … children who are in elementary school are very brainy but their parents have not the money to give them secondary school education' and as a result 'promising pupils' were denied the opportunity to develop their abilities further.[80] During the inter-war period, a significant proportion of working-class students who qualified for grammar schools refused to take up their place for economic reasons.[81] While James did not suggest a solution to the educational inequalities that he had observed, the 1944 Education Act went some way towards addressing these concerns, by acting upon the recommendations of the inter-war Spens Committee, and introduced free secondary education for all.[82]

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[74] 'Slum clearance in London', *The Times*, 27 July 1951, p. 3.

[75] *Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Camberwell*, 1955, p. 28.

[76] BL, MS. Opie 36/1/38.

[77] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/394.

[78] There is evidence, however, to suggest that children did not want to live in a prefab. See: BL, MS. Opie 37/1/383.

[79] S. Fielding, P. Thompson and N. Tiratsoo, *England Arise: the Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s Britain* (Manchester, 1995), p. 35.

The 1944 Act was more conservative when it came to the issue of independent schools.[83] No doubt this conservatism would have frustrated Richard who believed that 'public schools such as Eton and Harrow should be abolished, as they give rise to snobbishness, and allow the sons of peers etc, to have a so called superior education'. Richard firmly believed that 'admission to secondary schools should be on the basis of general intelligence not general wealth'.[84] Likewise, Arnold argued that 'a new system of education' should be introduced so that 'even the poorest people may receive the same education as the rich. Public schools should be abolished + schools set up under government control'.[85] These aspirations were predicated on a considerable expansion in the role of the state after the conflict had ended. The importance of educational equality was also observed among adult research participants. In October 1943, MO published a report – which used information collected in January 1941 and September 1942 – about people's post-war aspirations. Researchers found that education was the topic about which the most panel members hoped to see changes after the war, more so than housing or improvements in standards of living. MO noted that 'there was a general feeling that … greater equality of education was needed'. The report cited a 'middle-class man' who called for changes to ensure that 'nobody misses a decent education because his parents can't afford to lose his support'.[86] While MO did not observe widespread support for the abolition of independent schools, the report reveals important areas of overlap between the attitudes of older pupils and the 'considered and thoughtful' views of the panel members.[87] Historians seeking to understand public attitudes towards reform need to consider the views of school-aged pupils whose opinions often aligned with those of adults surveyed as part of better-known research projects. Indeed, as Tebbutt has argued, amid the totality of the Second World War progressive policymakers were eager to listen to the views of teenagers. It is important that historians do likewise.

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[80] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 14.

[81] B. Jackson and D. Marsden, *Education and the Working Class* (London, 1962), p. 230.

[82] B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800–1945* (London, 2004), pp. 292–3.

[83] B. Simon, 'The 1944 Education Act: a Conservative measure?', *History of Education*, xv (1986), 31–43, at p. 43.

[84] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 27.

[85] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 8.

[86] MOA, 'Post-war hopes', *Mass Observation Bulletin*, Oct. 1943, p. 1.

The reforms put forward by Arnold and Richard had a great deal in common with the proposals advanced by A. D. Lindsay, the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, in his submission to *Picture Post*'s 'Plan for Britain'. Lindsay's article, which was published in early 1941, complained that there existed 'one system of education for the poor and another for the rich' and that all too often 'the decision as to which boys should go to which schools … depends not on ability or fitness, but on wealth and class'.[88] While it can be tempting to attribute the suggestions contained within the West Ham essays to the optimism of youth, the pupils' ideals are better understood as the product of a wartime culture in which educational inequality was perceived to be an 'evil' that required a 'radical … cure'.[89]

Education was often understood to benefit society as a whole, in part by ensuring greater equality of opportunity once people left school. David, who began his essay by arguing that the post-war world should see 'more equalisation of wealth', believed that 'all schools should be founded upon the same principles + students who fail to pass examinations should not be allowed to attain high positions through favouritism'.[90] Educational assessment was thought to provide an important defence against nepotistic employment practices. Leonard Schwarz has argued that by 1939 most professions largely accepted the need for professional examinations.[91] The West Ham pupils wished to address the barriers which prevented poorer students from being able to sit professional exams in the first place. Henry recommended that the state should 'provide an education for every boy and girl up to the age of sixteen'. Doing so, Henry argued, would provide 'every child the chance to get on in the world'. Henry was keen to ensure that it was not only the young who should benefit from access to great opportunities. Once the war was over, 'working men should be allowed to enter the Government if they are fit for the position'. Henry was concerned that many of the existing Members of Parliament 'have not enough sense to keep goats'.[92] The inclusion of 'working men' in national politics was thought to provide a solution to this problem. It was anticipated that if these changes were introduced, 'this country would be in a much better condition'.[93] Improving educational provision was also considered to be vital to addressing specific problems. Arthur believed that in order to address slum housing, 'colleges should now be set up to train the future planners and architects of the post-war world'.[94] Educational reforms were viewed as a means of achieving greater social equality and addressing the nation's housing needs.

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[87] MOA, 'Post-war hopes', *Mass Observation Bulletin*, Oct. 1943, p. 1.

[88] A. D. Lindsay, 'Plan for education', *A Plan for Britain*, x (4 Jan. 1941), 27–31, at p. 27.

[89] Lindsay, 'Plan for education', pp. 27–31.

[90] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 25.

[91] L. Schwarz, 'Professions, elites, and universities in England, 1870–1970', *The Historical Journal*, xlvii (2004), 941–62, at p. 957.

Much like in West Ham, education formed an important component of many of the Camberwell essays. Peter Mandler has noted education represented 'one of the principal sites of socialisation – *the* most important site outside the family'.[95] Given that children spent so much of their time in schools that were close to their homes, it is not surprising that educational spaces were mentioned in more than half of all the essays. Compared to the West Ham material, however, the Camberwell essays displayed a much less politicized understanding of education. This reflected three important differences between the essay collections. First, the questions asked of the Camberwell and West Ham pupils encouraged very different responses. The latter group of pupils were explicitly asked to think about the future and what improvements they would like to see. By framing the question in this way, pupils were encouraged to justify the changes that they wanted. In contrast, the Camberwell essayists were asked to write about their present-day neighbourhoods. This exercise did not explicitly encourage respondents to consider what changes should be introduced and why this might be preferable to the current system. The overwhelming majority of Camberwell essays only mentioned schooling in passing and so conformed to the descriptive style of writing encouraged by the question.[96] Second, at a time when the franchise was limited to those over the age of twenty-one, it is significant that many of the Camberwell writers were much younger than the West Ham pupils. The average age among the Camberwell respondents was eleven years old and fewer than twenty per cent of pupils were over the age of fourteen. In contrast, all of the West Ham pupils were at least fourteen years old. Finally, the context in which the pupils were writing differed considerably. The West Ham essays were produced during a period of heightened public interest in social reform and at a time when encouraging teenagers to voice their opinions was thought to strengthen social democracy. The Camberwell essays were the product of a period of far greater political consensus, one in which the consequences of wartime changes to education policy were still being enacted.

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[92] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 16.

[93] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 16.

[94] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 12.

[95] P. Mandler, 'Educating the nation I: schools', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxiv (2014), 5–28, at p. 6.

[96] See, eg: BL, MS. Opie 36/2/228.

The 1944 Education Act required local authorities to provide free secondary education for all. It did not, however, stipulate what form this education should take, only that it should be suited to different 'ages, abilities and aptitudes'. In practice, nearly all local authorities, including the LCC, adopted a bipartite system which comprised grammar schools and secondary modern schools. The views and experiences described in a small subsection of the Camberwell essays shed important light on how the first generation of students educated under the Butler Act viewed the opportunities available to them as well as revealing important changes in the value that children placed on educational equality.

Social surveys conducted between the early 1950s and the mid-1960s consistently found that parents of all social classes aspired for their children to attend a grammar school.[97] Many of the Camberwell pupils shared this aspiration. Eleven-year-old Beryl explained that just north of her local park was 'Honor Oak Grammar School' and that this was 'where I would like to go to if I get a grammar school place'.[98] Beryl understood that attendance at the local grammar school was not guaranteed. Several students commented in more general terms on people's respect for grammar schools. Fourteen-year-old Doris, for example, observed that 'a few yards away from the hospital is Wilsons Grammar School for Boys it … is a very good school so I have heard some people say'.[99] While particular grammar schools were singled out for praise, none of the pupils' essays expressed a preference for attending a secondary modern school. The Camberwell pupils shared their parents' enthusiasm for a grammar school education.

South London was home to a number of well-established independent schools. Earlier it was shown that several of the West Ham writers advocated for the abolition of public schools. In Camberwell, on the other hand, none of the contributors criticized the existence of independent schools. Further research is needed to establish to what extent the absence of any criticism, particularly in light of the reforms advocated by the West Ham pupils, was a reflection of changing attitudes towards independent schools in the years after the Second World War. The independent schools referred to most frequently in the Camberwell essays – James Allen's Girls' School (JAGS) (referred to by nine pupils) and Dulwich College (by thirty-four) – both owed their existence to the Elizabethan actor Edward Alleyn. Despite their common origins, prior to the 1944 Education Act, the schools had very different statuses. JAGS had been a direct grant school while Dulwich College was part of the Headmasters' Conference (HMC), an organization that brought together the country's leading public schools.[100]

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[97] Mandler, 'Educating the nation', p. 13.

[98] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/244.

[99] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/349.

Much like pupils' discussions of state-funded schools, most of the essays which referred to the local independent schools only mentioned them very briefly. The small number of pupils who discussed the schools in more depth, however, were overwhelmingly positive. Eight-year-old Richard devoted a large proportion of his writing to discussing the local schools. Part way through his essay, Richard explained that 'James Allayen's [sic] … takes children from 5 to 18, lots of children want to go there'.[101] The appeal of going to an independent school was also remarked upon by ten-year-old Clive, who explained that 'there is a great school called Dulwich College which I hope to go to'. As with Richard's essay, Clive made no reference to the fact that the majority of students who attended Dulwich College paid fees.[102] Neither writer explained why people aspired to attend these schools in particular. Information provided by a third student suggests that part of the appeal lay in the belief that attendance would improve pupils' future employment prospects. Thirteen-year-old Victor, who attended a local secondary modern school, closed his essay by describing some of the famous landmarks in his community: 'the other famous place is the college … If you go to the college, you have a chance of a better job than you would have if you went to an ordinary school'.[103] Victor's distinction between Dulwich College and 'an ordinary school' is best understood as evidence of the difference that pupils perceived between secondary modern and non-secondary modern schools, as opposed to state and independent schools.[104] Much like some of the West Ham writers, young people believed that the type of school a person attended could inform their life opportunities. Unlike their wartime counterparts, however, none of the children growing up in Camberwell expressed opposition to independent schooling on the grounds that it unfairly discriminated between children on the basis of their parents' wealth.

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[100] *The Public Schools and the General Educational System: Report of the Committee on Public Schools* (London, 1944), pp. 126, 128; T. Halstead, 'The First World War and public school ethos: the case of Uppingham School', *War & Society*, xxxiv (2015), 209–29, at p. 210.

[101] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/312.

[102] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/75.

[103] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/330.

The views and experiences described in a small subsection of these essays shed important light on how the first generation of students educated under the Butler Act viewed the opportunities available to them. Peter Mandler's study of social surveys completed by adults led him to conclude that 'support for grammar schools did not imply support for meritocracy'.[105] The 1944 Education Act led parents to view education as 'a universal public service … [so that] parents of all classes came to seek the best teachers and schools for their children'.[106] The Camberwell essays develop this argument further. Children shared their parents' aspiration to attend what were perceived to be the best schools. This aspiration arose in part because it was believed that the type of education a person received could have an important influence on the opportunities available to them in the years that followed. The Camberwell pupils were among the first generation of children to benefit from reforms advocated for by their West Ham predecessors. The egalitarian zeal displayed by pupils writing at the height of the Second World War, however, was strikingly absent among secondary school students writing twelve years later.

Healthcare

Public opinion has long been credited with playing a vital role in shaping healthcare policy in the late 1940s. Charles Webster has argued that Labour's introduction of the NHS represented a response 'to public demand'.[107] Likewise, Lawrence Jacobs has suggested that during the Second World War the general public supported 'enlarging the state's role in social welfare and healthcare' and this position directly influenced the actions of senior policymakers.[108] Most recently, however, Nick Hayes has asserted that 'generally people and patients did not see root-and-branch reform as necessary', in large part because of the success of contributory payment schemes.[109] Indeed, even wartime proponents of a state medical service acknowledged that the existing health system catered to the needs of poorer patients. In his contribution to *Picture Post*'s 'Plan for Britain', Dr Maurice Newfield conceded that 'in our great hospitals the poor can get for a trifling payment or even for nothing the skill and attention for which the rich have to pay dearly'.[110] Newfield was concerned, however, that in order to access hospital treatment 'the poor must be ill'. As a result, people were discouraged from seeking 'early diagnosis and treatment' and instead waited until they were 'really ill before calling in the doctor'.[111] Newfield's desire to see greater emphasis placed on preventative healthcare was consistent with the arguments advanced by the inter-war founders of the Peckham Health Centre who believed that doctors were wrong to ignore 'the uncomplaining or so-called "healthy"' members of the population.[112]

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[104] Michael Young and Peter Willmott observed that residents of Bethnal Green used the phrase 'ordinary school' to refer the secondary modern schools, rather than state-funded schools more generally. M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* [1957] (London, 2011), pp. 29–30.

[105] Mandler, 'Educating the nation', p. 5.

[106] Mandler, 'Educating the nation', p. 13.

[107] C. Webster, *The National Health Service: a Political History* (Oxford, 2002), p. 256.

Hayes has argued that of the many areas discussed in relation to reconstruction, 'employment and housing consistently dominated as the key issues, with health reform hardly mentioned'.[113] Indeed, MO's study into hoped-for changes in the post-war world made no mention of reform to health services.[114] Nor did health feature heavily in the West Ham essays, a fact that suggests that children's perspectives on this aspect of welfare were very similar to those of their parents. Employment and housing were the issues that children most often referred to in their essays. Healthcare provision, on the other hand, was referred to just once when David, who had called for a greater distribution of the nation's wealth, argued that after the war 'state hospitals and nursing homes ought to be built'.[115] While David suggested that 'everything should be worked in an economical way', he stopped short of advocating for nationalization of the health service. The West Ham essays indicate that healthcare reform, of the kind that emerged as a result of the National Health Service Act 1946, was not a priority for young people growing up in wartime who were more concerned about post-war housing and employment. Hayes' assertions that there was 'no great popular demand from the average man or woman' for radical change in the way healthcare was provided extended to the average girl and boy.[116]

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[108] L. Jacobs, *The Health of Nations: Public Opinion and the Making of American and British Health Policy* (London, 1993), pp. 112, 120.

[109] N. Hayes, 'Did we really want a National Health Service? Hospitals, patients and public opinions before 1948', *The English Historical Review*, cxxvii (2012), 625–61, at p. 626.

[110] M. Newfield, 'A real medical service', *Picture Post*, x (4 Jan. 1941), pp. 36–8, at p. 36.

[111] Newfield, 'A real medical service', p. 36.

[112] I. H. Pearse, 'The Peckham Experiment', *Eugenics Review*, xxxvii (1945), 48–55, at p. 48. For more information about the Peckham Health Centre, see: P. Conford, '"Smashed by the national health?" A closer look at the demise of the Pioneer Health Centre, Peckham', *Medical History*, lx (2016), 250–69; L. A. Hall, 'The archives of the Pioneer Health Centre, Peckham, in the Wellcome Library', *Social History of Medicine*, xiv (2001), 525–38.

[113] Hayes, 'Did we really want a National Health Service?', p. 641.

[114] MOA, 'Post-war hopes', *Mass Observation Bulletin*, Oct. 1943, p. 1.

Turning to the post-war period, Martin Gorsky has noted that histories of the NHS have tended to comprise 'top-down histor[ies] of the politics of the service' with a particular focus on the actions of 'politicians, officials, doctors, intellectuals and pressure groups driving the policy process'.[117] Harry Hendrick's study of hospital visiting practices provides a refreshingly different perspective. Hendrick has charted the process by which the distress of pre-school patients, at being separated from their parents, came to be regarded as a legitimate emotion. This work, however, stops short of investigating the attitudes of young people towards the NHS.[118] More recently, a team of historians at the University of Warwick has begun to collect evidence in an effort to develop a 'People's History of the NHS'. The retrospective accounts collected through the project, however, require historians to 'grapple with how memory is shaped over the passage of time, particularly around discussion of moments which are now regarded as "historic" '.[119] The writings of the Camberwell pupils provide a valuable means by which we can prospectively examine young people's mid-twentieth-century attitudes towards the NHS. The pupils' essays provide an alternative perspective from which to respond to Andrew Seaton's call for a more holistic understanding of the service.[120]

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[115] MOA, 59/6/E, Essay 25.

[116] Hayes, 'Did we really want a National Health Service?', p. 661.

[117] M. Gorsky, 'The British National Health Service 1948–2008: a review of the historiography', *Social History of Medicine*, xxi (2008), 437–60, at p. 438.

[118] H. Hendrick, 'Children's emotional well-being and mental health in early post-Second World War Britain: the case of unrestricted hospital visiting', in *Cultures of Child Health in Britain and the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Gijswijt-Hofstra and H. Marland (Amsterdam, 2003), pp. 213–42, at p. 213.

[119] J. Crane, 'Saving the NHS: activism over time', *People's History of the NHS* (blog) <https://peopleshistorynhs.org/encyclopaedia/saving-the-nhs-activism-over-time/> [accessed 18 May 2020].

[120] A. Seaton, 'Against the "sacred cow": NHS opposition and the Fellowship for Freedom in Medicine, 1948–72', *Twentieth Century British History*, xxvi (2015), 424–49, at p. 427.

Children largely shared their parents' conservative view of the NHS.[121] This is particularly significant because children were disproportionately likely to come into contact with the NHS.[122] As Gareth Millward has noted, children were central to post-war immunization campaigns as vaccination programmes became an established part of the British welfare state.[123] Maria Marven's chapter in this volume shows that by the early 1950s the NHS was one of the largest providers of children's convalescent homes in London.[124] Yet, health services were referred to by fewer than ten per cent of the Camberwell children. Not a single essay made direct reference to the NHS. In fact, libraries were mentioned three times more often than hospitals. Within the twenty-seven essays which did refer to healthcare services, several commented on repairs taking place at St Giles' Hospital. Inspection reports produced by the Nursing Council for England and Wales reveal that the hospital sustained damage during the Second World War. The operating theatre and administrative unit were eventually reopened in 1954.[125] These repairs did not go unnoticed. Ten-year-old Ann, for example, explained that 'Saint Giles Hospital is very near our home. It has recently been repaired from damage in the war'.[126] None of the essays which mentioned the repair of St Giles' Hospital, however, connected this to the advent of the NHS. The hospital stood alongside a host of other local amenities, including blocks of flats, a local church and an art gallery, which pupils observed had needed to be repaired as a result of damage sustained during the Second World War.[127]

The small number of essays which discuss people's use of health services suggest that, despite Maurice Newfield's aspirations, young people growing up in Camberwell did not view the NHS as a preventative service.[128] The pupils' essays indicate that people predominately used the health service once they had become unwell. Seven-year-old Marilyn explained that 'there is a hospital in my road which is very useful if you have hurt yourself or are very ill'.[129] Likewise, thirteen-year-old Janet explained that 'doctors are very helpful and there is [sic] three or four doctors and two hospitals near us in case of accident and they are very helpful'.[130] Janet's repetition of the use of the adjective 'helpful' is one of just two instances in which the young writers judged the support that people could expect to receive from medical experts. The second occurrence is found in eleven-year-old Sandra's essay: 'Saint Giles Hospital … is a very nice Hospital and they would do anything for you'.[131] Given that the NHS replaced a system in which women and children, in particular, did not have easy access to healthcare, Sandra's comments suggest that by the mid-1950s at least some children were appreciative of what they perceived to be the generosity of local hospitals, even if they stopped short of connecting this to the nationalization of healthcare.[132] The absence of any reference to the NHS supports Mathew Thomson's assessment that the service missed the opportunity to establish a 'strong, distinctive, new identity' in its early years.[133] Despite the frequency with which the NHS has been presented as the jewel in the crown of the post-war welfare state, the writings of both wartime and post-war pupils suggest that healthcare reforms were not viewed as a significant break from the past. This is consistent with Jennifer Crane's finding that prior to the 1980s health-based activism was focused on local issues rather than a sense of the NHS as a national service.[134]

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[121] For evidence of the conservativism of the adult public see: Hayes, 'Did we really want a National Health Service?', p. 657.

[122] J. Crane, 'Why the history of public consultation matters for contemporary health policy', *Endeavour*, xlii (2018), 9–16, at p. 11.

[123] G. Millward, *Vaccinating Britain: Mass Vaccination and the Public since the Second World War* (Manchester, 2019), pp. 2, 47.

[124] See Figure 5.1.

[125] TNA, DT 33/960, Report on third visit to hospital, 7 Nov. 1956, pp. 3–4.

[126] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/361.

[127] See, eg: BL, MS. Opie 36/2/124, 131, 312.

[128] Newfield, 'A real medical service', p. 36.

Conclusion

In order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the welfare state, historians need to be attentive to the views and experiences of children. The chapter began by acknowledging the significance of Carolyn Steedman's school orange juice to histories of post-war welfare. One of the central claims of this chapter is that shortly before Steedman was born, children were presented with multiple opportunities to express their opinions as part of initiatives designed to strengthen their sense of citizenship as future members of Britain's democratic culture. The essays produced by the West Ham pupils are a testament to this principle. Their contents reflected a combination of personal and familial experience of inter-war hardship with public and political arguments for state-led reform. The enthusiasm for reform among West Ham's pupils stands in stark contrast to the modest expectations Harris observed among men in working-class employment. The fact that attendees of West Ham's grammar schools included children whose parents were in working-class occupations suggests that initiatives that sought to encourage children to view themselves as part of the national community succeeded in encouraging working-class students to perceive the future differently from those already in employment. The Second World War was an important moment in which children were viewed as future citizens and encouraged to contribute to national conversations about the kind of future that people wished to see.

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[129] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/69.

[130] BL, MS. Opie 36/1/36–37.

[131] BL, MS. Opie 36/2/379.

[132] Crane, 'Why the history of public consultation matters for contemporary health policy', p. 11.

[133] M. Thomson, 'The NHS and the public: a historical perspective' <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2017/10/nhs-and-public-historical-perspective> [accessed 18 May 2020].

[134] J. Crane, ' "Save our NHS": activism, information-based expertise and the "new times" of the 1980s', *Contemporary British History*, xxxiii (2019), 52–74, at p. 58.

Turning to the Camberwell essays, this chapter has shown that children were aware of the important role that different branches of local government played in delivering welfare services. On the other hand, central government was noticeable by its absence from the pupils' work. This is all the more significant when we consider that during the Second World War working-class men expected increased provision would come 'from Whitehall' rather than though an extension of 'local services'.[135] Historians have long acknowledged that the provision of post-war welfare services was characterized by regional disparities. In order to develop our understanding further, scholars need to explore the ways in which children responded to these differences, particularly as this was a time when many families were relocating to suburban areas. How, for example, did children react to discovering that facilities enjoyed in one location were not available elsewhere in the country?

Finally, by considering pupils' attitudes towards distinct components of welfare, this chapter has shown that the history of the welfare state is better understood as comprising a series of separate, but related, strands of support. The West Ham pupils' desire for better housing was echoed in the Camberwell children's approval of the many new homes that were under construction. The pupils differed, however, in their understanding of the origins of the need for new homes. Wartime memories of inter-war slums disappeared by the 1950s as London's children came to believe that post-war reconstruction represented a response to damage sustained during the conflict. The intergenerational relations which proved so formative in shaping the wartime pupils' expectations of the state appeared to have receded in importance by the 1950s. The essays were most similar in their discussion of healthcare, a service that arguably underwent the most significant changes after the war. Pupils' relative indifference towards the formation of the NHS is best understood as further evidence of a lack of enthusiasm for health reform. More research is needed in order to understand the point at which the NHS became the secular religion it is more commonly known as today. Children's attitudes towards educational reform, on the other hand, reveal important changes. The egalitarian principles contained within many of the West Ham essays were noticeably absent among the Camberwell pupils. The first generation of pupils educated under the Butler Act benefitted from reforms which expanded their educational opportunities. These same pupils, however, appeared content to accept a system which retained significant educational inequalities.

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[135] Harris, 'Did British workers want the welfare state?', p. 213.

7. Welfare and constraint on children's agency: the case of post-war UK child migration programmes to Australia

Gordon Lynch

One of the central theoretical discussions to have emerged in the historical study of children's lives, and in the 'new' childhood studies more generally, concerns the nature of children's agency in relation to institutional structures and practices shaped by adults. Moving beyond simple binaries of the structural determinism of children's lives, or an emphasis on children's agency as resistance against adult social worlds, this growing literature has sought to develop more nuanced accounts of how children sustain and extend adults' institutional projects and recursively reproduce structures of childhood through their own actions.[1] Approaches which situate agency within the individual child have also increasingly given way to relational and distributed concepts of agency which understand it in terms of how it is enacted inter-subjectively through social relations and in social worlds shaped by both human and non-human actants.[2] Through this work, the conceptual boundaries of the social worlds of the adult and the child have become increasingly blurred and replaced with a growing recognition of complex and contingent patterns of interaction between children, adults and the social and material worlds that they inhabit.[3]

In the Introduction to this book, Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor rightly critique earlier studies in the history of welfare which have assumed

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[1] See, eg, A. James and A. James, *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice* (Basingstoke, 2004); M. Gleason, 'Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth and education', *History of Education*, xxxxv (2016), 446–59.

[2] See, eg, A. Strhan, *The Figure of the Child in Contemporary Evangelicalism* (Oxford, 2019).

[3] See, eg, D. Oswell, *The Agency of Children: From Family to Global Human Rights* (Cambridge, 2013); *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies*, ed. F. Esser, M. Baader, T. Betz and B. Hungarland (Abingdon, 2016).

G. Lynch, 'Welfare and constraint on children's agency: the case of post-war UK child migration programmes to Australia', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 175–96.

that children were passive recipients of adult interventions. As this book has demonstrated, children's engagement with welfare has been far more complex than this and their agency has played a far greater role in the experience and delivery of welfare than such studies have recognized. The nature and extent of children's agency has also varied significantly across different welfare settings. This chapter seeks to complement the examples of children's agency in the previous chapters in this book by returning to a case in which this agency was significantly constrained. In doing so, it seeks to challenge the assumption that children's agency was always limited in welfare services by examining specific social, cultural and institutional factors through which constraint can occur.

The chapter will pursue this task by analysing the experiences of post-war UK child migrants to Australia.[4] After providing an initial account of the policy and organizational framework for these assisted migration programmes, it will consider the ways in which the agency of these child migrants was often constrained. These limitations had particular significance in this historical period given the aspirations in the influential 1946 Curtis report for encouraging children's autonomy and individual development in out-of-home care.[5] The effects of such constraints in framing child migrants' perceptions of what was possible for their lives and their sense of place in the world will also be discussed. The chapter will then go on to consider three contingent factors which gave rise to these constraints – macro-level governmental policies, meso-level organizational cultures and practices, and micro-level interactions between children and those charged with their care. The chapter concludes by considering two broader ways in which the approach used in this chapter might be relevant to studying children's engagement with welfare in other historical contexts.

The policy and organizational context of post-war UK child migration to Australia

Post-war child migration to Australia built on a longer history of the use of assisted emigration as a form of welfare intervention, with an estimated 90,000 British children sent to Canada through such initiatives between

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[4] Although this focus is primarily on UK child migration, it is also important to recognize the parallel emigration of an estimated 310 children in the post-war period from Malta to Australia, with most of these children experiencing the same institutional conditions described in this chapter (see Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record* [Canberra, 2001], 2.120–2.131).

[5] *Report of the Care of Children Committee* (Parl. Papers 1946 [Cd.6922]).

1869 and 1924, and just over 3,000 to Australia in the inter-war period.[6] While Australia was the main destination for post-war British child migrants, with 3,170 sent there in 1947–65,[7] hundreds were also sent through smaller-scale schemes to Canada, New Zealand and the former Southern Rhodesia.[8] Originally conceived of in the late Victorian period as a means for improving employment opportunities for poor children, by the post-war period child migration had come to occupy a more limited place in British policymakers' imaginations as an intervention that might benefit children with few or no family ties in the United Kingdom for whom a fresh start overseas might be beneficial. 'Child' migration was, throughout this period, understood as the assisted emigration of children under school-leaving age in contrast to 'juvenile' emigration schemes for children over school-leaving age, which were typically structured around placing older teenagers directly into work placements and also operated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[9] The increasingly clear separation of child and juvenile emigration schemes from the 1920s onwards reflected a growing emphasis on school-leaving age as a marker for different kinds of policy intervention.[10] For those above school-leaving age, the concern was with ensuring that adequate training was being provided for their future lives overseas and that they were not simply being exploited as cheap labour. For those under school-leaving age, there was greater concern with their vulnerability in overseas placements and, in the post-war period, with the need for care that would support their emotional and social development.[11]

Children emigrated to Canada before 1924 were more likely to be in their early teens, although some younger children were sent to Canada through a boarding-out scheme run by Dr Barnardo's Homes.[12] By contrast, post-war child migrants to Australia tended to be younger (some as young as four or five years old), reflecting the view of Australian authorities and voluntary organizations that it was better for children to have longer to assimilate into the Australian educational system before entering the workplace.[13] In the post-war period, boys were more commonly sent overseas than girls, with boys making up around two-thirds of post-war British child migrants to Australia.[14] The experience of child migrants was, in important respects, gendered, with boys in the Fairbridge system trained to be farmers and girls as domestic workers or farmers' wives. Although Fairbridge farm schools accepted both boys and girls (though accommodated them in single-sex cottage homes), residential institutions run by Catholic religious orders were, in most cases, single-sex and separated siblings across different institutions by age and gender. Although most tended to be emotionally austere, this gender division in Catholic children's homes meant that most boys grew up in an ethos of aggressive masculinity, while girls grew up in environments characterized by shame in relation to their bodies and sexuality.

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[6] See, eg, R. Parker, *Uprooted: the Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917* (Bristol, 2010); G. Lynch, *UK Child Migration to Australia: a Study in Policy Failure* (Basingstoke, 2021).

[7] S. Constantine, 'The British government, child welfare and child migration to Australia after 1945', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xxx (2002), 99–132.

[8] On this, see, eg, K. Uusihakala, 'Rescuing children, reforming the Empire: British child migration to colonial Southern Rhodesia', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, xxii (2014), 273–87; E. Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge, 2014); G. Lynch, *Remembering Child Migration: Faith, Nation-Building and the Wounds of Charity* (London, 2015).

[9] On the history of juvenile emigration schemes, see, eg, Parker, *Uprooted*; M. Harper, *Emigration from Scotland Between the Wars* (Manchester, 1998).

[10] See, eg, *Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, President of the Oversea Settlement Committee, from the Delegation Appointed to Obtain Information Regarding the System of Child Migration and Settlement in Canada* (London, 1924).

[11] See, eg, The National Archives of the UK (henceforth TNA), Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Migration Policy, 1956, DO35/10217.

Child migration to Australia in the inter-war period had been understood primarily as an aspect of wider UK policy on empire settlement, overseen by the Dominions Office and part-funded under the terms of the 1922 Empire Settlement Act. In the post-war period, however, child migration came to occupy a more complex policy space.[15] The Australian Commonwealth government sought to increase the population of Australia by immigration, and saw child migrants as one strategically valuable route to achieving this aim.[16] By contrast, the Commonwealth Relations Office (until 1947, the Dominions Office) wished to reduce UK government expenditure on empire settlement schemes while preserving good relations with Australia and saw maintaining the comparatively small expenditure on child migration, while cutting the budget for adult emigration, as a way of maintaining these diplomatic bonds.[17] Alongside this, in the wake of the Curtis report and 1948 Children Act, which were intended to mark a decisive break from the old fragmented provision of the Poor Law, the Home Office had assumed new responsibilities as the lead department responsible for children's out-of-home care in England and Wales. In doing so, the Home Office acquired new interests and powers in the emigration of children by local authorities and voluntary organizations.[18] Negotiation of these competing policy aims took place in the context of growing critical scrutiny of child migration by professional and voluntary bodies in the United Kingdom, including the British Federation of Social Workers, the newly appointed Children's Officers for local authorities, the Provisional National Council on Mental Health and the Women's Group on Public Welfare.[19]

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[12] See, eg, J. Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869–1924* (Toronto, 1994).

[13] On contemporaneous policy debates about the suitable age for child migrants to Australia, see, eg, J. Moss, *Child Migration to Australia* (London, 1953).

[14] See Moss, *Child Migration to Australia*.

[15] On this, see Constantine, 'British government'; Lynch, *UK Child Migration to Australia*.

[16] See, eg, The National Archives of Australia, Canberra (henceforth, NAA): A446, 1960/66716; A441, 1952/13/2684; A689, 1944/43/554/2/5.

The Australian Commonwealth government's aspirations to receive many thousands of child migrants from the United Kingdom was never realized. In some post-war years – 1947, 1950, 1952 and 1953 – between 300 and 400 British children sailed to Australia per annum. These peaks usually coincided with higher periods of recruitment of children from Catholic children's homes.[20] By the mid-1950s, the numbers sailing were beginning to fall with fewer than 100 child migrants leaving Britain annually for most years from 1957 onwards. Although Australian authorities acknowledged calls for child migrants to receive care compatible with the standards recommended in the Curtis report, in practice little significant change occurred in the decade 1947–56 in which most unaccompanied post-war child migrants arrived. By the mid-1950s, with decreasing numbers of children being put forward for emigration, the Fairbridge Society in particular began to focus its energies more on 'one-parent' or 'two-parent' schemes in which children would travel to Australia and remain in residential institutions for some months or years until their parents had also emigrated and found settled work and accommodation. These one- and two-parent schemes were to outlast the practice of sending unaccompanied child migrants, with 1,900 children sent to the Fairbridge farm school at Pinjarra through them up until 1980.[21]

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[17] On this, see eg, TNA, DO35/3424.

[18] On early policy discussions of these responsibilities within the Home Office, see TNA, MH102/1553.

[19] See, eg, TNA, DO35/1133/M803/41; MH102/1562.

[20] Constantine, 'British government', Appendix.

[21] More children were sent to the Fairbridge farm school at Pinjarra, Western Australia through Fairbridge's one- or two-parent scheme, between 1960 and 1980, than Fairbridge had previously sent to Pinjarra for the whole period, 1913–1960 (see G. Sherington and C. Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (Nedlands, WA, 1998), p. 264).

The experiences of former British child migrants have, since 1996, been the primary or partial focus of nine public inquiries and reports.[22] While child migrants' experiences clearly varied, these have recorded accounts of physical and sexual abuse, emotional neglect, poor education and training, exploitation of labour and inadequate aftercare at several of the socially and geographically isolated residential institutions to which they were sent. In contrast to cases discussed in other chapters in this book, in which children usually engaged with multiple health and welfare services, the fact that most child migrants to Australia grew up with often little contact with external organizations, other than local schools, meant that standards of care in these institutions had a particularly significant bearing on their lives.[23]

The failure to provide adequate safeguards for British child migrants, despite an awareness of the risks of such programmes,[24] was a result of competing policy interests between government departments and the problems created by multi-agency management of a trans-national welfare scheme. Policymakers' perceptions of the risks of making choices that might antagonize Australian organizations or voluntary organizations (and their powerful supporters) in the United Kingdom also inhibited their willingness to take strong, but unpopular, positions on child migrants' welfare. The legal and practical challenges of maintaining effective oversight and protection of children spread across the Australian land mass, over 9,000 miles away from London, also proved intractable. While, in 1957, the UK government did introduce a somewhat stronger inspection regime of the child migration activities of sending organizations, this was ten years after the first post-war child migrants had sailed to Australia and the UK government had little power to control standards of care, education and training once children were in Australia.[25] Powers to regulate the child migration work of voluntary organizations under s.33 of the 1948 Children Act were never introduced, after the Home Office decided in 1954, following a five-year consultation period, that such measures would have little legal reach or practical benefit.[26] Instead, the Home Office came to a working agreement with the Commonwealth Relations Office that conditions for child migrants in Australia should be improved by a process of gradual reform, made possible by on-going moral persuasion of Australian governmental and voluntary organizations to adopt standards encouraged in the 1946 Curtis report.[27]

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[22] See Legislative Assembly, Western Australia, Select Committee into Child Migration, *Interim Report* (Perth, 1996); UK Parliament Health Committee, Third Report, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants* (London, 1998); *Preliminary Report on Neerkol for the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (Brisbane, 1998); *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (Brisbane, 1999) also known as the Forde Report; Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents*; Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, *Report of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry* (Belfast, 2017); Australian Royal Commission, *Case Studies 5 (on Salvation Army institutions in Queensland and New South Wales), 11 (on Christian Brothers institutions in Western Australia)* and *26 (on St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol)* (Canberra: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2014–15); Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report* (London, 2018). The case study on Scottish child migrants by the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is still being undertaken at the point of writing this chapter.

[23] A number of Australian institutions undertook primary education on-site, and in the case of those run by Catholic teaching orders such as the Christian Brothers, secondary education also took place on-site as well.

[24] See, eg, TNA, MH102/1763, 'Note by the Home Office on questions for consideration in connection with the emigration of children', March 1949.

This approach was briefly interrupted when a Fact-Finding Mission to Australia, led by the former head of the Home Office Children's Department, John Ross, returned a report in 1956 advocating much stronger regulatory controls over the child migration work of voluntary organizations and made even stronger criticisms of individual receiving institutions in unpublished, confidential addenda.[28] Careful management of the report's publication by the Commonwealth Relations Office meant, however, that it did not disrupt the delicate equilibrium of relationships between the Commonwealth government, UK government and voluntary organizations involved.[29] The process did lay bare, however, the fact that Australian authorities were not willing to pursue reforms to the extent that British policymakers had hoped for. British civil servants ultimately resorted to the hope that child migration programmes would soon dwindle out of existence through fewer British children being made available to be sent overseas. As Pooley and Taylor note earlier in this book, the power of the nation-state in children's welfare services has sometimes been over-estimated. The post-war child migration programmes certainly provide a clear example of the ways in which both complex systems of collaboration between voluntary organizations and national and local government, and policymakers' own sense of the limits of their powers, contributed to a system of welfare over which the UK government felt it had only limited influence.

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[25] On policy discussions about these new arrangements, see eg, TNA, DO35/6383.

[26] On this policy process, see eg, TNA, MH102/2038; MH102/2040; MH102/2047.

[27] On the development of this consensus in policy discussions surrounding the production of the 1954 inter-departmental committee report on migration policy, see TNA, DO35/4879.

[28] *Child Migration to Australia: Report of a Fact-Finding Mission* (Parl. Papers, 1956 [Cmd. 9832]). Copies of the confidential addenda are held by TNA, BN29/1325.

[29] See TNA, DO35/6381–6383.

For the most part, post-war British child migrants were children who had been placed in residential institutions by their families, local authorities or court order. These residential homes included those run by charities such as Dr Barnardo's Homes, the Children's Society and the Middlemore Emigration Homes in Birmingham, as well as religious orders, particularly the Sisters of Nazareth.[30] Often they were children of single parents unable to maintain them, or had been placed in residential care because of other reasons of family ill-heath, bereavement, abandonment or breakdown. Other child migrants came from low-income families who were persuaded by organizations such as the Fairbridge Society and the Church of England Advisory Council of Empire Settlement that their child's future prospects would be far better in Australia than at home. The child migration schemes to Australia were therefore usually inherently classed, and although a small proportion of child migrants were enabled to progress through secondary and occasionally tertiary education in their teenage and early adult years, most were directed to manual trades. The original vision of these schemes that boys would receive training and develop skills to be able to set up their own farms in later life was one that was rarely achieved in practice. The lower aspirations for these children contrasted with the post-war emigration scheme to the Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College, which explicitly sought to recruit children from middle-class families who had fallen on hard times with the intention that they would be trained up for more senior roles in white-governed Southern Rhodesia.[31]

The nature and extent of parental consent for children's emigration remains a complex and contested issue. For some organizations, such as the Sisters of Nazareth and Catholic Child Welfare Council, written records of parental consent are less common than for other organizations such as Dr Barnardo's Homes. Claims that parents may, in some cases, have given oral rather than written consent are made alongside other claims that, in some cases, parental signatures were not genuine. While these issues are not always easy to clarify through surviving records, there is more consistent evidence that children themselves did not have a very clear sense of what emigrating to Australia would be like or indeed even how far away it was. In many cases, former child migrants have recalled not giving any active consent to their emigration at all.[32]

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[30] For a useful summary of organizations' selection practices, see Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report*.

[31] Uusihakala, 'Rescuing children'.

[32] See, eg, Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, Module 2: Child Migrant Programme, witness statement HIA286, p. 2 (henceforth presented in style HIA286.2).

The nature and effects of constraints upon child migrants' agency

Post-war child migration to Australia resumed in the context of a major restructuring of children's out-of-home care in England and Wales in the wake of the Curtis report.[33] Beyond its recommendations for administrative reform, the report also played an important symbolic role in setting out an ethos and standards for children's care which were widely seen as a progressive step away from regimented, impersonal and punitive approaches of the past.[34] The report also framed public policy discussions of post-war child migration by recommending that child migration be allowed to re-start, but only for children who had no meaningful family contacts or prospects and only if care overseas was of the standard that it advocated for England and Wales.[35]

Central to the Curtis Committee's understanding of the healthy care of the child was an emphasis on encouraging children's individual and civic agency – an emphasis which was also carried over into the 1948 Children Act. Its report described children as being in need of care that was attentive to their individual emotions and grounded in 'security of affection' and that supported their increasing autonomy. Disturbed by what they had observed of children's withdrawn or anxious behaviour in a number of large residential institutions they had visited while taking evidence, the Committee critiqued those institutions which operated in overly regimented ways, provided little opportunity for children to acquire their own possessions or have personalized spaces in the home and gave them little opportunity for developing their individual imaginations through well-resourced play.[36] While influenced by popularized notions of child psychology[37] which emphasized the importance of the development of a child's emotional security and the value of play for their development,[38] the Committee also argued for the correct cultivation of children's agency as essential to their preparation as future citizens. Children should be given regular pocket money, it recommended, so that they learned how to manage their money. They should also undertake a reasonable amount of housework – appropriate to their age – and older girls should learn to maintain and mend their clothes, so that they would develop the necessary skills to run their own households in the future. This understanding of the need to cultivate children's personal and civic agency was fundamental to the Committee's critique of large residential institutions which it felt, for reasons of scale and lack of individual care, would provide less individual attention for children and place greater constraints on their choices. Although some well-run large institutions might be able to mitigate these risks to some extent, Committee members had seen too many examples of socially isolated, regimented and unimaginative children's homes to be persuaded that they could be as beneficial for children as adoption, foster care or smaller grouped or scattered residential units.[39]

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[33] See, eg, J. A. G. Griffiths, *Central Departments and Local Authorities* (London, 1966); G. Lynch, 'Pathways to the 1946 Curtis report and the post-war reconstruction of children's out-of-home care', *Contemporary British History*, xxxiv (2020), 22–43.

[34] On the report's impact on childcare structures and practices, see eg, B. Holman, *Child Care Revisited: The Children's Departments, 1948–1971* (London, 1998).

[35] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, para 515.

[36] See, eg, *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paras 141, 159, 195, 208, 234–6, 252–4.

[37] On this, see, eg, M. Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006); Lynch, *UK Child Migration to Australia*.

[38] See, eg, evidence presented by the Committee by Susan Isaacs, TNA, MH102/1451D/C32.

Unlike the programme operated by the Overseas League and New Zealand government, in which British child migrants were placed directly with foster carers on arrival in New Zealand, the Australian Commonwealth and state governments consistently took the view that it was safer to receive child migrants initially in residential institutions run by voluntary organizations and with foster-placements to be arranged from there.[40] Australian authorities regarded this approach as entailing far less risk to child migrants than the New Zealand scheme, as it would provide time for child migrants and their prospective foster carers to meet each other before foster-placements were finalized. Without such a precaution, state child welfare officials feared, such placements were at much greater risk of breaking down with the care of child migrants then becoming the primary responsibility of state governments rather than the voluntary organizations who had arranged their immigration.[41]

While this principle of using residential institutions as initial receiving homes for child migrants was accepted by the United Kingdom government, it became increasingly clear that only a small proportion of British children were in fact being placed out in Australian foster homes. Most were retained by residential institutions until school-leaving age when they were placed out in work. Alongside the hope that more child migrants would, in due course, be boarded out, civil servants in the Home Office Children's Department were particularly concerned that receiving institutions in Australia might replicate the regimented and impersonal approaches to childcare that the Curtis Committee had deplored. With only sporadic information about conditions in these institutions provided over a number of years, these concerns were eventually vindicated by the confidential comments of the 1956 Fact-Finding Mission led by John Ross, which indicated that a number of Australian children's homes fell below standards that the Curtis Committee would have considered acceptable.[42] In the absence of any other system for recording child migrants' experiences or concerns, these very occasional visits became the only way in which the United Kingdom government had any independent views on the conditions in which they were living.

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[39] See *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paras 210–11, 239, 241, 264.

[40] See, eg, the policy decision by Australian Commonwealth and state government officials to reject a proposal from the Overseas League to approve a scheme similar to the New Zealand one, see NAA: A446, 1960/66717.

[41] A later review of the New Zealand scheme, in 1953, by the national Superintendent of Child Welfare did indeed identify placement breakdown as a serious shortcoming with its approach (see Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation*, transcript of public hearing day 11, pp. 77–8).

Contemporaneous source material for accounts of child migrants' experiences of their early lives is very limited. Unlike nineteenth-century periodicals published by organizations such as Dr Barnardo's Homes and the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges and Homes, publicity materials and annual reports for post-war child migration schemes gave no space to child migrants' own words. Instead, photographs were used to illustrate organizations' claims about the beneficial effects of their work.[43] Child migrants' letters were, at best, sporadic and often censored by the children's homes in which they were living and there were few other opportunities for them to record their experiences at the time. More substantial material on child migrants' reflections on their experiences has been generated through later public initiatives, including written and oral evidence given to public inquiries and investigations (see footnote 9 above), and oral histories.[44] Former child migrants have also published their own autobiographical accounts of their early lives.[45] While this source material needs to be interpreted in relation to the context in which it was produced, there is considerable continuity in the experiences described in this chapter across a number of these accounts.[46] As the Introduction to this book notes, such material can be valuable in informing our understanding of the significance of childhood experience across a person's life course.

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[42] On the 1956 Fact-Finding Mission, see Constantine, 'British government', and Lynch, *Remembering Child Migration*.

[43] On photography in organizational publications in post-war childcare, see also J. Fink, 'Inside a hall of mirrors: residential care and the shifting constructions of childhood in mid-twentieth century Britain', *Paedagogica Historica*, xliv (2008), 287–307.

[44] See the National Library of Australia's *Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project* which contains 43 digitized and transcribed interviews relevant to this project.

[45] See, eg, D. Hill, *The Forgotten Children: Fairbridge Farm School and Its Betrayal of Australia's Child Migrants* (Sydney, 2008); J. Hawkins, *The Bush Orphanage* (Docklands, VIC, 2009); P. Harding, *Apology Accepted: a 1950s Kid from Fairbridge* (ebook no location, 2014).

From this material, it is clear that child migrants experienced a range of constraints on their lives.[47] In a number of receiving institutions, the large numbers of children being accommodated and low staff–child ratio tended inevitably towards a regime in which children's days were structured around a rigid timetable which left little time in the day for free play.[48] Time structured around work to support the running of the institution and participation in religious services, lessons and meals made up much of the child migrant's week.[49] While some institutions offered more opportunity for free time at weekends, in many cases leisure activities were also carefully structured, group events. Some former child migrants recalled being compelled to undertake work that they found arduous or distressing, whether physically demanding building work in hot conditions, the slaughter of animals on farms or nursing care (including preparation of dead bodies) in wards for elderly residents attached to some receiving institutions.[50]

The experience of having one's time managed within a 'total institution'[51] was compounded by the fact that, in a number of cases, these residential homes were located some distance away from local communities. The Curtis report had emphasized the importance of locating residential units in local communities to enable children to build up their own friendships with other children outside the home and make their own use of activities and resources in their neighbourhood.[52] The isolation of a number of receiving institutions in Australia, however, made such informal contacts impractical and meant that many child migrants' engagement with local communities tended only to take place through structured group activities such as sporting fixtures or musical performances. Some receiving institutions in suburban neighbourhoods were more successful in encouraging children's more autonomous engagement with their local communities, but the isolationist cultures of homes run by some religious orders meant that these opportunities were not always realized despite them being located in larger population centres.[53]

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[46] There is also considerable continuity in accounts of abuse with material collated by the VOICES organization in the early 1990s before public reports began to be published (see National Library of Australia, Bruce Blyth papers, NLA MS10123).

[47] Source material for accounts of child migrants' experiences of their early lives primarily come in the form of evidence given to public inquiries and investigations (see footnote 22 above), oral histories (for which the main public resource is the National Library of Australia's *Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project*, which contains 43 digitized and transcribed interviews relevant to this history), and autobiographical accounts by former child migrants. See, eg, Hill, *Forgotten Children*; Hawkins, *The Bush Orphanage*; Harding, *Apology Accepted*.

[48] See, eg, Hill, *Forgotten Children*.

[49] See, eg, Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI), Day 171 transcript, p. 20 (henceforth abbreviated in the style SCAI.D171.20); SCAI.D172.39–44; SCAI.D177.113.

[50] See, eg, SCAI, D177.35–6, 82–3; HIA323.8.

[51] E. Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York, 1961).

[52] See *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paras 161, 167, 199, 201–3, 206, 213, 250, 256–8, 375.

Child migrants' sense of isolation was, for many, also deepened by their lack of communication with family members outside of the institution. There were complex variations in voluntary organizations' approaches to supporting children's on-going contact either with siblings placed in other institutions in Australia or with family members back in Britain. The failure by some sending organizations, such as the Sisters of Nazareth and the Church of England Advisory Council of Empire Settlement, to send children's case histories over with them meant that receiving institutions appear often to have assumed incorrectly that these children were orphans.[54] Even where contact was supported, censorship of letters meant that children were usually not able to express their unhappiness at institutional life in this correspondence and letters and presents from family members were not always passed on to them either.[55] Child migrants' capacity to complain about their treatment was also limited because they were rarely provided with the opportunity to speak with external state government inspectors without residential staff being present. This issue was compounded by a more pervasive sense that any complaints that they made might not be believed.

Constraints on child migrants' choices also extended to their transitions from life in residential institutions to their post-institutional work placements. By 1945, civil servants and ministers in the Dominions Office had become increasingly concerned at the very limited vocational opportunities being offered for British child migrants in Australian farm schools. Officials began to give serious thought to ending funding for children to be sent to institutions such as the Fairbridge farm school at Pinjarra, Western Australia, which were regarded as having particularly poor records in this regard.[56] While some child migrants were more supported with their personal choices of career, most were placed into whatever work their institution or child welfare officials found for them. Some work placements were located in urban areas, but many were situated in remote local areas, further compounding the isolation and lack of opportunities that child migrants had experienced in their residential homes. As child migrants began to adapt to their new work placements, their undeveloped skills for life outside an institution also became more obvious.

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[53] For examples of residential institutions in suburban areas which did succeed in allowing greater freedom for child migrants in engaging with their local communities, see confidential addenda on the Murray-Dwyer orphanage run by the Daughters of Charity and the Burwood home run by Dr Barnardo's Homes in TNA, BN29/1325.

[54] On this, see eg, G. Lynch, 'The Church of England Advisory Council of Empire Settlement and post-war child migration to Australia', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, lxxi (2020), 798–826; G. Lynch, 'Catholic child migration schemes from the United Kingdom to Australia: systemic failures and religious legitimation', *Journal of Religious History*, xliv (2020), 273–94.

[55] See, eg, SCAI.D171.13; SCAI.D176.52–3.

While child migrants therefore experienced a number of constraints on their lives as a result of these organizational practices, other limits on their agency occurred through their personal treatment by staff. A number of former child migrants have spoken about how their confidence was undermined by staff members who mocked them, told them that they were unwanted by their families, or humiliated them after they had wet their beds.[57] A sense of reduced agency was also felt by children in residential institutions in which there was systemic violence against children by staff or sexual abuse. Some former residents of Christian Brothers' institutions in Western Australia have, for example, spoken about how the pervasive culture of violence against boys in these institutions created conditions in which they felt less able to resist staff members who wished to exploit them sexually.[58]

The experience of heavy constraints on their agency was not shared among all child migrants. Some found pathways at particular institutions, or through contacts with particular members of staff, which gradually increased their sense of autonomy and meaningful place in the world. In many cases, however, the childhood agency recalled by former child migrants more commonly took the form of 'tactical' resistance against the institutional regimes in which they were living.[59] Sometimes this took the form of hiding personal possessions, breaking rules by going into areas designated as out of bounds, or stealing food.[60] The cultivation of friendships with other children in an institution, or the keeping of pets, were also expressions of agency that former child migrants later looked back on positively. At times, more dramatic forms of resistance took place such as threatening a staff member who had acted in a physically or sexually abusive way, or running away from the institution.[61] The act of running away rarely meant any long-term respite from the institution, however. The geographical isolation of institutions, child migrants' usual lack of external contacts and the fact that, as wards of the state, absconding child migrants would be returned to institutions by the police, meant that those who ran away would almost always find themselves returned back to the institution they had left. Such acts of resistance, perhaps unsurprisingly, became more common as child migrants entered their teenage years.

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[56] See TNA, DO35/1138/M1007/1/2.

[57] See, eg, SCAI.D171.11,21; SCAI.D173.34; SCAI.D.176.25; HIA326.3.

[58] See, eg, evidence by FWS, SCAI.D179.

[59] On 'tactical' forms of agency, see M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2 vols, Berkeley, 1984). i.

[60] See, eg, SCAI.D.173.34.

Such experiences were, of course, not entirely unique to child migrants. Many of the constraints they encountered were common more generally in cases where restrictive regimes operated in children's homes in the post-war period.[62] What appears to have compounded these institutional constraints for many, however, was the geographical and social isolation of many of these residential homes and children's sense of displacement in a new country in which they felt they had no one to whom they could look for care and support. As one put it, 'As children we had nowhere to turn. I was out in the middle of nowhere. I spent my time there in a state of anxiety, looking over my shoulder, never comfortable because anybody bigger could do what they wanted to'.[63]

Learning from children's experience of constraint in welfare services

Such constraints for child migrants occurred at the intersection of macro-level national policies and administrative systems, meso-level organizational cultures and practices and micro-level interactions with staff. The recollections of former child migrants suggest that their sense of limited agency was not simply caused by institutional conditions over which they had little control but, in many cases, an internalized sense of diminished capacity built on a sense of social isolation, lack of belonging and worthlessness. Their accounts suggest that children's agency be usefully understood not simply in terms of social assemblages of networks, relationships and power, but in psycho-social terms in which it is constituted by both the social worlds children inhabit and the internalized meanings of that world for them learned over time.[64] There is, of course, no neutral vantage point from which to conceptualize children's agency, and to think in such psycho-social terms is, to at least some extent, to continue in the same vein of attention to the internal and external world of the child that animated the Curtis report. While recognizing the contingent historical roots and context of such a psycho-social perspective, this approach nevertheless has value for identifying not simply the social nature of children's agency but its on-going significance for the individual in terms of their internalized emotional rendering of their place and capacities in the world. As one former child migrant put it, institutional practices such as the failure to celebrate birthdays or lack of choice about his work placement was a 'way of life' that he accepted as the social reality that he inhabited.[65] He only came to an expanded sense of his agency and of possibilities for his life through relationships which he developed in adult life. Another commented, 'I sailed over here for a good life and I got messed up. I was bashed, flogged and molested … I haven't really had a good life. I still go to bed now sometimes and feel scared. It's with me all the time.'[66]

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[61] See, eg, SCAI.D171.24; SCAI.D173.54.

[62] See, eg, S. Swain, 'Institutionalized childhood: the orphanage remembered', *Journal of History of Childhood and Youth*, viii (2015), 17–33.

[63] HIA338.3.

A psycho-social approach therefore encourages a recognition of the effects on the individual child of significant constraint in their experience of welfare, as well as the specific conditions through which such constraint occurs. In terms of the former, it is important to recognize how in later life a number of former child migrants experienced these constraints as holding them back from fuller experiences of personal and working life and as a form of existential pain. An existential perspective on people's experience of their social worlds recognizes the importance of their fluctuating sense of connection to meaning, value, purpose and well-being.[67] As the anthropologist Michael Jackson has argued, while concepts of well-being are always culturally constructed and change through time, the experience of arbitrary constraint from the life well-lived can give rise to a more fundamental sense of existential frustration or despair.[68] Although such cultural notions of well-being shift through time (as Jackson found, for example, in relation to people in his field-site in Sierra Leone whose sense of well-being and deprivation had been changed through experiences of uneven access to new mobile phone technology), these concepts nevertheless provide interpretative frames through which individuals evaluate their lives. To feel permanently excluded, for reasons beyond one's control, from an experience of well-being that should be within reach, can generate an existential sense of dislocation between one's self and the world. This sense of an 'existential wound' can be felt in the present, or it can, as many former child migrants have found, be experienced in relation to deprivation in early life which has had long-lasting consequences. As one put it, in an emotional concluding statement to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse:

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[64] On theory and method in psycho-social studies, see, eg, S. Frosh, *Psychoanalysis Outside the Clinic: Interventions in Psychosocial Studies* (Basingstoke, 2010).

[65] Interview with Maurice Crawford-Raby, *Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project*, session 1, 49.18.

[66] SCAI.D171.36–7.

[67] See, eg, *Existential Sociology*, ed. J. Douglas and J. Johnson (Cambridge, 2010); *What is Existential Anthropology?*, ed. M. Jackson and A. Piette (Oxford, 2015).

[68] M. Jackson, *Life Within Limits: Well-Being in a World of Want* (Durham, NC, 2011). On the relationship between power, institutional practices, agency and existential meaning in historical context, see also R. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: the Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, 2005).

> I just – growing up, when I went to Bindoon, you sent me to a bloody slave camp … That's all I could call bloody Bindoon, a bloody slave camp. That's what it was. They just sexually abused you, they did what they want to you, they never believed you … What's the worst handicap they've given me? Not allowing me to read and write, learn … And separating me from my mother, when we were asking time and time again, and I class that – my education and keeping my family away is worse than the sexual abuse, what they did, what they did to us. It was just unbelievable … They just had full control of you and nobody believed you, you know. And they made you go to confession. I said, 'I don't want to go', and they make you go, you know. Yeah.[69]

The sources of suffering identified by many former child migrants in later life were not therefore always necessarily the physical and sexual abuse which have been the focus of more recent inquiries, but other aspects of their experience which had enduring effects on their adult lives. These included a lack of adequate education, a lack of sex education, barriers to maintaining meaningful contacts with other family members, an absence of emotional nurture which affected their capacity to express intimacy with partners and their children in later life and a more general failure to prepare them for life in the world beyond the institution. In reflecting back on their lives, many former child migrants have also talked about how they managed to mitigate these early constraints to varying degrees through the care of partners, the support of other child migrants, taking up educational opportunities in later life, the support of external agencies in reconnecting with close and extended family, and their own resilience in refusing to allow their lives to be defined by their early experiences.

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[69] Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Child Migration Programmes Investigation, transcript of Day 7, witness A11, pp. 63–6.

Alongside a recognition of these psycho-social and existential dimensions of children's experience of constraint in this context, it is also important to acknowledge the social and cultural factors that contributed to these constraints. While these were primarily mediated through the different structures and practices of the receiving institutions to which child migrants were sent, these were grounded not only in factors specific to those individual receiving organizations but in a wider framework of policy systems and decisions in which the particular forms of post-war child migration to Australia had evolved.

A number of macro-level policies had a significant bearing on the conditions in which child migrants lived in Australia. An early version of the Commonwealth government's ambitious plan to bring 50,000 'war orphans' to Australia in the immediate post-war years entailed building new cottage homes in urban areas which would be run by state governments, reflecting the model of smaller residential units embedded in local communities which the Curtis report also went on to endorse.[70] While preferred as an approach that would prevent the institutionalization of child migrants, a financial assessment of its costs quickly established that building cottage homes on this scale would be prohibitively expensive.[71] With growing uncertainties as to how many child migrants might be available anyway, the Commonwealth government adapted its plans by funding the expansion of existing residential institutions run by voluntary organizations in Australia, most of which tended to be larger and more socially and geographically isolated.[72] As noted above, the Commonwealth government's aversion to placing child migrants immediately in foster homes also led to a system in which children were received and usually retained for many years in these residential homes. Despite initial aspirations from the Home Office to pressure voluntary organizations to adapt their receiving institutions in Australia along the lines of those recommended by the Curtis Committee, its gradualist approach to encouraging reform brought few practical changes to child migrants' lives in Australia. There was, therefore, nothing inevitable in British child migrants spending their childhoods in large and isolated institutions in Australia. Rather, this occurred through a series of policy decisions that emerged out of the complex interplay of the structures and interests of the various governmental and voluntary bodies involved in this work.

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[70] On discussions of this policy within the Commonwealth government, see NAA, A9816, 1944/589.

[71] Projected budgets and discussions of these costs are held on NAA, A446, 1960/66716. On similar cost–benefit analysis being used in relation to children's services in England, see J. Taylor, '"Her hostess … is anxious to have her back when she is cured": the impact of evacuation on wartime local services, England, 1939–1945', *Medical Humanities*, xlv (2020), 144–53, at pp. 147–8.

[72] See Immigration: Decision of Premiers' Conference, 20 Aug. 1946, TNA, DO35/1134/M822/85.

In addition to these macro-level policies, child migrants' experiences in residential homes in Australia were also, to varying degrees, shaped by the different understandings of children's agency held in the organizations running them. In some cases, for example, children's agency was understood in terms of their need for religious formation in which their expressions of agency could be perceived as sinful dissent from religious authority. In post-war Catholic child migration programmes, there was a strong emphasis on the moral rescue of the children involved and the importance of them being maintained in a Catholic environment on arrival in Australia. In this context, a number of Catholic receiving institutions in Australia seem to have perceived child migrants primarily as disciplined members of the wider body of the Church and of their religious order, rather than in terms of individuals whose autonomy needed careful cultivation.[73] By contrast, the Fairbridge Society projected an organizational view of children as individuals whose inherent capacities could be given healthier expression in the open spaces of the Commonwealth.[74] Both views, in practice, occupied a complex place in the structures, relationships and practices of those organizations and among the staff who worked in them. In some cases, notably at the Christian Brothers' institutions in Western Australia, staff exploited the authoritarian religious culture of their order to sexually exploit boys in their care.[75] At the Fairbridge farm schools, the ideal vision of the child's expanded agency in the Australian countryside was too often undercut by unsuitable staff, lack of educational support and over-reliance on their labour.[76] While not simply determining child migrants' experiences, different organizational views of the nature of children's agency and how it should be cultivated nevertheless did play a role in shaping the different organizational cultures in which they grew up. As noted earlier in the chapter, other constraints could arise for child migrants through specific organizational practices such as the failure to transfer family histories or case records to Australia and over-reliance on children's labour at specific institutions.

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[73] See, eg, Lynch, 'Catholic child migration'.

[74] G. Sherington and C. Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (Nedlands, WA, 1998).

[75] See, eg, Royal Commission Case Study 6, *Christian Brothers*.

[76] Hill, *Forgotten Children*.

Alongside these macro-level policies, and meso-level organizational factors, child migrants' micro-level interactions also played an important role in their experience of agency. While individual institutions did, to a large extent, have common cultures and rules, child migrants' pathways through these institutions were also shaped by the individuals with whom they most interacted. In the Fairbridge farm schools, for example, which operated on the basis of a grouped cottage home model, children's experiences were often profoundly shaped by whether cottage mothers were empathic, kind, controlling or cruel.[77] Children could also have quite different experiences of the same member of staff, for example if a child was considered to be one of those staff member's 'favourites' or not.[78] Even in institutions in which abuse was more systemic, child migrants could sometimes remember staff with whom they experienced a greater sense of individual recognition.

Conclusion: thinking about children's experiences of agency in relation to welfare

This chapter has sought to analyse how children's agency was understood, shaped and constrained in the context of post-war child migration programmes to Australia. Physical, social and emotional dislocation through movement to a new country, compounded by life in isolated institutions, constituted a very different experience of welfare compared to most post-war British children, other than perhaps those who continued to live in authoritarian and isolated institutions into the 1960s.

Arguably, part of the value of this more extreme case, though, is in providing some insights into how children's agency in relation to welfare might be understood more generally. Two broad observations can be made in relation to this.

First, this case exemplifies how concepts of agency are not something merely brought by historians to their field of study but that different understandings of agency are already present and at work in these historical cases. The post-war child migration schemes operated in a context in which tensions were becoming clearer between more secular views of the need to cultivate children's agency through supportive social and emotional conditions and religious views of the importance of cultivating children's agency primarily in terms of their immersion in a particular denominational milieu. Exemplified in dissenting opinions expressed by members of the Curtis Committee on whether it was more important for a child to receive care in a 'family-like' environment regardless of its religious affiliation, or whether a child's carers should always be of their same denomination, this tension also found expression in contrasting understandings of children's development held between governmental bodies and religious organizations involved in child migration. This tension became particularly clearly expressed in differences of view between policymakers on the risks of institutionalization for children in large, impersonal residential homes, and the defence of these institutions by the Church and religious orders as an integral part of a distinctive Catholic system of education in Australia.[79] As noted above, the cultures of the residential institutions in which child migrants grew up in Australia were also shaped by different organizational understandings of what constituted healthy agency on the part of the child and how this should be developed. Concepts of children's agency are always historically and culturally situated – whether the concepts used by the historian or the concepts in use in the contexts they study. An analysis of children's agency in the context of historical welfare provision will therefore usefully attend to the ways in which that provision was itself shaped and practised in relation to particular understandings of children's agency and its development.

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[77] See, eg, Hill, *Forgotten Children*; SCAI.D172.59; SCAI.176.144–5; SCAI.D178.34–5.

[78] SCAI.D172.65–6.

Second, this case demonstrates that children's experience of agency in relation to welfare is shaped by contingent historical and social factors. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it is possible to identify how macro-level policy processes, meso-level organizational factors and micro-level personal interactions all combined in ways that, for many child migrants, placed significant constraints on their sense of agency and fell below standards of supporting children's development which had been endorsed in the Curtis report. As has been demonstrated in other discussions of children's agency,[80] such agency is never a static or timeless trait within the individual child, but is interpreted, evoked, worked on and constrained through contingent assemblages of concepts, people, structures, practices and the affordances of material spaces and objects. This chapter has argued, however, that it is insufficient merely to locate an analysis of children's agency in the realm of the social, and that a psycho-social approach is needed to recognize these social factors as well as the internalized meanings which they come to hold for the child. Through such an approach, it is possible to see not only how children's experiences of agency were shaped through the particular historical and social conditions in which they grew up, but how these experiences developed their on-going sense of self and social world as they moved through their adult lives. Again, as this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, while significant constraints on a child's agency can be experienced as a form of existential wound, the effects of these can both be enduring through a person's life course and be mitigated or re-worked through later life experiences. Understanding the interplay between specific historical conditions of welfare provision and children's experience of agency in relation to them can therefore involve not merely an analysis of social and cultural factors at play but the internalized effects of these for the child's later life.

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[79] See, eg, TNA, MH102/1883.

[80] See, eg, Oswell, *The Agency of Children*.

Taken alongside the other chapters in this book, this analysis will therefore hopefully contribute to on-going discussions about how we conceptualize children's experience of welfare as historical subjects embedded in wider social and institutional contexts which simultaneously range from the trans-national to the local.

8. 'The school that I'd like': children and teenagers write about education in England and Wales, 1945–79

Laura Tisdall[1]

In the first half of 2020, following the closure of schools across England and Wales in March because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government, professional bodies and the media focused on the impact of these closures on children's welfare. While concerns were frequently expressed about students' loss of access to formal education, the framing of these debates often emphasized that their social and emotional welfare was equally, if not more, important. Writing in the *Guardian* in June 2020, the educational psychologist Gavin Morgan stated that 'Schools give much more to our children than merely opportunities to learn. They also promote the development of a child's social emotional and mental health needs'.[2] A letter signed by 1,500 members of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in the same month, pressing the government to focus on the reopening of schools, echoed Morgan's priorities, stating that 'school is about much more than learning' and outlining schools' expected responsibilities as a 'safety net' for child safeguarding, identifying children in need and referring them on to the correct services.[3]

From a historical perspective, this is not always how schools' welfare functions have been understood or prioritized. English and Welsh schools

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[2] G. Morgan, 'Children's mental health will suffer irreparably if schools don't reopen soon', the *Guardian*, 20 June 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/20/childrens-mental-health-will-suffer-irreparably-if-schools-dont-reopen-soon> [accessed 24 July 2020].

[3] Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 'Open letter from UK paediatricians about the return of children to schools', 17 June 2020 <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/open_letter_re_schools_reopening_2020-06-17.pdf> [accessed 24 July 2020].

L. Tisdall, '"The school that I'd like": children and teenagers write about education in England and Wales, 1945–79', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 197–219.

were first reframed as an institution of the welfare state and education as a 'universal benefit' by the 1944 Education Act, which established the right to separate secondary education after the age of eleven, promoting the abolition of all-age elementary schools.[4] While this principle was not enshrined by the act itself, this led to the creation of a tripartite system of secondary school provision: state-educated students should attend either a grammar school, technical school or secondary modern. In practice, the limited provision of technical schools by most local authorities led to a bipartite split, with approximately seventy per cent of the school-age population, largely from working-class backgrounds, attending secondary modern schools in the 1950s, while approximately twenty per cent, largely from middle-class backgrounds, attended grammar schools.[5] In Wales, the proportion of grammar schools was higher, and so the split was different: forty-five per cent of students attended grammar schools and forty-eight per cent attended secondary moderns in 1951.[6] The introduction of comprehensive schools led to the gradual decline, although not the absolute extinction, of the tripartite system; in 1961, less than ten per cent of students were in comprehensives, but by the end of the 1960s, this had risen to a third and, by the end of the 1970s, to eighty per cent.[7] Welsh schools went comprehensive even earlier, with eighty-five per cent of state-educated adolescents in comprehensives by 1980.[8]

Within this reconstructed system, the connection between schools and welfare was fundamentally transformed in two ways. First, schools and teachers took on a far greater range of formally defined welfare responsibilities. English and Welsh schools were compelled to provide free school meals and medical inspections from the early twentieth century onwards, but these statutory obligations focused on their students' physical health. As Martin Lawn has argued, during the Second World War teachers became part of a social welfare administration, reluctantly accepting new duties such as the supervision of school meals, and this fundamentally reshaped their relationships with both the state and their pupils.[9] Teachers also came into increased contact with welfare professionals such as educational psychologists, a service that was virtually non-existent before 1945, but rapidly expanded thereafter; there were 140 full-time educational psychologists in England and Wales by 1955 and 640 in 1972.[10]

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[4] P. Mandler, 'Educating the nation I: schools', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxiv (2014), 5–28.

[5] D. Cannadine, J. Keating and N. Sheldon, *The Right Kind of History: Teaching the Past in Twentieth-Century England* (London, 2011), p. 109.

[6] Secondary Education and Social Change [SESC] Project, University of Cambridge, 'Briefing paper: secondary modern schools', Oct. 2017 <https://sesc.hist.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Briefing-paper-Secondary-modern-schools.pdf> [accessed 24 July 2020].

[7] G. McCulloch, 'Secondary education', in *A Century of Education*, ed. R. Aldrich (London, 2002), pp. 31–54, at p. 44.

[8] K. Watson, 'Education and opportunity', in *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Cultural and Social Change*, ed. F. Carnevali and J. Strange (Harlow, 2007, 2nd ed.), pp. 354–73, at p. 363.

Second, and more importantly, however, the idea that the welfare function of the school could be reduced to a specific set of subsidiary duties was challenged after 1945. The actual experience of attending school was now positioned as crucial to the promotion of children's and adolescents' welfare. The increasing popularity of child-centred education in primary and secondary modern schools in England and Wales, spearheaded by the national inspectorate, emphasized the importance of students' emotional and social development in the classroom, alongside their physical and intellectual needs. Moreover, the school was reconfigured as the ideal space for healthy development to take place, because it was now organized strictly by chronological age, and regular interactions with one's peer group were viewed as essential for psychological health.[11] School curricula were designed to meet the perceived requirements of the student's present developmental psychological stage, linking lessons with the child or adolescent's 'natural interests'.[12] But although mainstream pedagogy now emphasized that education must have the interests of the student at its heart, children and adolescents were rarely consulted about what they wanted from their schools.

Histories of education in twentieth-century Britain have almost never engaged with the contemporary voices of school students.[13] However, considering what students wrote about school while they were still enrolled is crucially important in understanding how schools affected children's and adolescents' welfare. As one fifteen year old wrote in 1962, addressing their imagined adult self:

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[9] M. Lawn, 'What is the teacher's job? Work and welfare in elementary teaching, 1940–1945', in *Teachers: the Culture and Politics of Work*, ed. M. Lawn and G. Grace (London, 1987), pp. 50–67.

[10] A. Wooldridge, *Measuring the Mind: Education and Psychology in England, c.1860–c.1990* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 316.

[11] Eg, Department of Education and Science [DES], *Children and Their Primary Schools* [Plowden Report] (London, 1967), p. 284.

[12] L. Tisdall, *A Progressive Education? How Childhood Changed in Mid-Twentieth-Century English and Welsh Schools* (Manchester, 2020).

[13] The SESC project is starting to address this. cf. L. Carter, 'English and Welsh secondary school magazines, 1950s–1970s', 30 March 2020 <https://sesc.hist.cam.ac.uk/2020/03/30/english-and-welsh-secondary-school-magazines-1950s-1970s/> and L. Carter, 'A thousand families and seventy-seven secondary schools in Newcastle-upon-Tyne', 16 Sept. 2019 <https://sesc.hist.cam.ac.uk/2019/09/16/a-thousand-families-and-seventy-seven-secondary-schools-in-newcastle-upon-tyne/> [accessed 27 July 2020].

> To myself in ten years time, I say, do not sigh and look back at yourself as a starry eyed teenager, because you never were. Your schooldays were not as free from care and trouble as you may think now … Do not think you did not work at school because you did.[14]

This teenage writer recognized that adults could not straightforwardly speak 'for' their child or adolescent selves, and when they did, they tended to resort to cliché. Drawing from the epistemological insights of, for instance, black feminist 'standpoint' theory, it has been recognized that a group systematically oppressed by a particular institution or set of power relationships possesses a particular set of insights into the workings of their own oppression.[15] This insightful subjectivity was precisely what children and adolescents lost when they left their primary or secondary school days behind them. Writing students' voices back into histories of education compels us to write different histories.

The gradual but inexorable reframing of the connection between schools and welfare provision in England and Wales after 1945 assumed that attending school was an unquestionable social and emotional good.[16] While not denying that individual students' welfare may have been enhanced by their experience of schooling over this period, this chapter suggests that, when we look at what students themselves had to say about their schools, we can see that the nature of institutional education itself was in tension with its ability to deliver on such assumptions. Precisely because post-war schools were organized hierarchically by chronological age and operated compulsory attendance policies, they became the location where dominant conceptions of childhood and adolescence were most clearly established and enacted.[17] Students were acutely aware of their lack of power in their relationships with adults, especially when they experienced intersectional oppression through identities such as, but not confined to, class, race and gender. These power imbalances were evident not solely through teachers' control over the curriculum, but via the physical spaces students occupied during school hours and the ways in which they were tagged as institutionalized bodies, for example, in the enforcement of school uniform policies. Because of this, some students, far from being grateful for the benefits bestowed upon them, challenged the idea that schooling, in its institutional manifestation, could ever have a positive impact on their personal welfare.

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[14] MMEC, WRI 1/1/8, 2 of 3, 46/376.

[15] P. H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (London, 2000, 2nd ed.).

[16] M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: the Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013).

[17] O. Zehavi, 'Becoming-woman, becoming-child: a joint political programme', in *Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends or Foes?*, ed. R. Rosen and K. Twamley (London, 2018), 241–57.

The largest single study of children's and adolescents' views on schooling in the 1960s and 1970s was the competition run by former secondary modern school teacher and writer Edward Blishen in 1967, when, through *The Observer*, he invited over-elevens to describe 'the school that I'd like', and received over a thousand entries. The individual submissions, unfortunately, do not survive, but Blishen published a selection of what he thought were the most 'intelligent, interesting, amusing, well-expressed' excerpts in *The School That I'd Like* in 1969.[18] This study has significant limitations. First, as this quotation suggests, it was filtered through Blishen's own sensibilities; as a self-defined 'progressive', he was primed to find adolescents arguing for innovations that already formed part of the child-centred curriculum.[19] Second, it seems evident that private and grammar school students were disproportionately represented in the entries that Blishen received and perhaps especially in those that he chose to quote in his book. Third, arguments with which he disagreed are not always included in the text; for example, Blishen noted that a 'minority of girls … would cling to' single-sex schools, but did not publish a single excerpt that made this argument, stating that he personally felt that single-sex schools were unnatural.[20]

Alongside Blishen's book, children's and adolescents' views on school can be found in numerous sociological and psychological studies from the 1960s and 1970s, and in other collections of essays written by young people. This chapter will draw principally from three such collections. The Multiple Marking of English Compositions (MMEC) and Development of Writing Abilities (DWA) projects were run by the Institute of Education (IoE) from 1962 to 1970. In the MMEC (1962–4), English adolescents attending the full range of secondary school types were asked to write essays on a variety of topics; in the DWA (1966–71), schoolwork completed in ordinary lessons was collected.[21] This chapter will also use the 1969 sweep of the British National Child Development Survey (NCDS), which asked its more than 13,000 eleven-year-old participants to write an essay on 'My life at 25'. Most of Blishen's respondents and all of the MMEC and DWA participants were in secondary school; however, ninety-six per cent of the NCDS essays were completed while the cohort members were still in their last year of primary school.[22] Alongside some scattered evidence from seven- to ten-year-olds, this allows us to consider students' views on primary as well as secondary education throughout this chapter. Although the NCDS represented English and Welsh eleven year olds, and some of Blishen's respondents were from Wales, place has not emerged as a significant variable in these writers' accounts of their schooling.

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[18] E. Blishen, ed., *The School That I'd Like* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 15.

[19] L. Tisdall, 'Inside the "blackboard jungle": male teachers and male students at British secondary modern schools in fact and fiction, 1950–59', *Cultural and Social History*, xii (2015), 489–507.

[20] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 125.

All three of the archival collections were mediated by adults. MMEC and DWA participants were compelled to take part in these studies by the schools that they attended, and appear to have been told very little about their aims. The NCDS tracked a cohort born in a single week in 1958; this meant that, as the essay was often written in school, cohort members were strongly encouraged to engage with a piece of work that their peers were not required to complete. These sources, therefore, should not be taken as unmediated expressions of what students really thought about the schools they attended. Adolescent writers, in particular, were often keen to emphasize their maturity by reflecting back what they perceived to be hegemonic adult discourses about topics such as public demonstrations, juvenile delinquency and tabloid newspapers.[23] Nevertheless, writers who chose to write about schooling in the MMEC, DWA and NCDS studies – none of which ever solicited their participants' views on education – often wrote more directly and critically about school than about other issues, perhaps encouraged by the new emphasis on the importance of personal experience in post-war creative writing assignments.[24] This recognition that they were writing from an 'expert' perspective that was not available to them when they wrote on other subjects was also evident in the responses of students who chose to enter Blishen's competition.

This chapter will explore how students in post-war England and Wales responded to the physical spaces they occupied during school hours, the content of the curriculum and their unequal power relationships with teachers. It will recognize that not all children and adolescents were able to voice their views about school, although a minority of these silenced students may have made themselves 'heard' by refusing to attend school altogether. Students' interventions, while perhaps understood and adopted in individual schools, had a limited long-term impact on the development of the education system in England and Wales, with the exception of the Schools Action Union's school strikes opposing corporal punishment (1968–74).[25] Nevertheless, these narratives emphasize that the school has always exercised a fundamental influence on children's and adolescents' welfare, and that this influence has not been as universally benign as post-war and contemporary policymakers and welfare professionals have imagined.

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[21] Students' names sometimes appear in the DWA material. These have all been changed to preserve confidentiality.

[22] J. Elliott, *National Child Development Study: Sample of Essays Written at Age 11 Archived to Accompany Biographical Interviews at Age 50* (London, 2013), p. 2.

[23] MMEC, WRI 1/1/1, 1 of 3, 3/4; WRI 1/1/2, 1 of 3, 13/7, 14/30.

[24] C. Steedman, 'State-sponsored autobiography', in *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945–1964*, ed. B. Conekin, F. Mort and C. Waters (London, 1999), pp. 41–54.

Child-centred buildings

The use of space, both within the individual classroom and across the school building/s, was important for English and Welsh progressive educationalists from the inter-war period onwards.[26] The ideal model of the 'child-centred' school, however, changed over time. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, innovators such as Mary Bews, who was an adviser for Oxfordshire primary schools, promoted brightly painted classrooms with large windows that let in the light, and suggested that moveable tables and chairs should replace heavy fixed double desks. When considering the design of the school as a whole, the provision of a school hall and library was seen as desirable for communal school dinners, sports and private study.[27] Other Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were slower to change, as logbook records indicate; Cambridgeshire schools gradually modernized over the course of the 1950s and 1960s.[28] But even as LEAs caught up, radical, purpose-built schools shaped a new ideal, relying on moveable partitions to create an entirely flexible space. Finmere, designed by David and Mary Medd, was unveiled in Oxfordshire in 1959 and became the model for later primary schools such as Eveline Lowe in Camberwell, which opened in 1966.[29] However, the vast majority of students in England and Wales would not have been educated in this kind of building.

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[25] C. Burke and I. Grosvenor, *The School I'd Like: Revisited* (Oxon, 2013, 2nd ed.); O. Emmerson, 'No to the cane', *Jacobin*, 22 Oct. 2017.

[26] P. Cunningham, *Curriculum Change in the Primary School since 1945: Dissemination of the Progressive Ideal* (London, 1988); A. Saint, *Towards a Social Architecture: the Role of School Building in Post-War England* (New Haven, 1987); C. Burke, P. Cunningham and I. Grosvenor, '"Putting education in its place": space, place and materialities in the history of education', *History of Education*, xxxix (2010), 677–80; P. Cunningham, C. Burke and J. Howard, ed., *The Decorated School: Essays on the Visual Culture of Schooling* (London, 2013).

[27] Oxfordshire Archives, OXOHA:OT 213 – Mary Bews – An adviser to Oxfordshire Primary Schools, interviewed by Philip Best (1996).

[28] Tisdall, *Progressive Education*, pp. 129–30.

While redesigning classroom and school layouts to facilitate child-centred learning, post-war progressives did not prioritize the aspects of schools that drew most criticism from the students themselves. Children's and adolescents' concerns, as recorded in Blishen's study, were often very practical. Schools were too hot or too cold; the toilets were badly kept, with broken locks, and too far away from classrooms; furniture was uncomfortable and too small; noise was a persistent issue, from both within and without the school.[30] While Blishen's respondents were virtually all of secondary school age, research conducted by John and Elizabeth Newson with seven-year-old children in Nottingham in the mid-1960s revealed a similar set of worries.[31] Primary school children hated having to get changed for physical exercise in front of the whole class because there were no separate changing rooms, with working-class children experiencing this as a particular ordeal due to the different norms of bodily modesty they had been taught.[32] Outdoor play space was also important, especially for children; this topic cannot be dealt with adequately here, but it is worth noting that, as with school buildings, the most elaborate child-centred recommendations for playgrounds were not adopted by the majority of schools, who were still dealing with practical problems like resurfacing outdoor areas to avoid injuries.[33]

The location of the school building could also be a persistent irritant to students, especially those attending secondary modern schools, which tended to be sited in more deprived industrial urban areas. The Newsom Report of 1963, which focused on secondary modern and comprehensive education, illustrated a number of especially egregious examples, including a school in the Midlands which was 'situated alongside a large sauce and pickle factory, and there is also a large brewery just behind it. The odours of vinegar and beer are constantly present and the air is full of soot particles'.[34]

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[29] Cunningham, *Curriculum Change*, p. 139.

[30] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, pp. 43–53.

[31] J. Newson and E. Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment* (London, 1976), p. 73.

[32] Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old*, p. 74.

[33] Tisdall, *Progressive Education*, p. 129. Children's views on post-war playgrounds are explored in I. Opie and P. Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (Oxford, 1969); A. Sluckin, *Growing Up in the Playground: the Social Development of Children* (London, 1981); P. Blatchford, R. Creeser and A. Mooney, 'Playground games and playtime: the children's view', *Educational Research*, xxxii (1990), 163–74.

[34] DES, *Half Our Future* (London, 1963) [Newsom Report], p. 17.

The practical impact of these kinds of noisy, smelly locations is indicated, unintentionally, by a group of essays collected in 1966 from a grammar school in Chiswick by the DWA project. Asked by the teacher to describe their immediate surroundings, this group of eleven year olds, who were in their first week at their new school, focused upon the distractions. The school sat at the intersection of a number of plane routes, so 'every now and then an aeroplane flies over head making so much noise that the teacher has to stop talking to us until the aeroplane has passed over', wrote Harry, while Jack, like a number of his classmates, was watching the busy Chertsey Road outside the window: 'A "Watney's" beer lorry has just passed … A motor bike has just passed by. "What a racket! I bet it couldnt make any more noise if it tried." '[35] This problem related to the age of the school buildings; this school occupied premises built in 1916 and 1926, when the weight of traffic was presumably lower and flight paths were not an issue.[36]

The promotion of 'hands-on' learning by child-centred educationalists often required expensive new facilities, especially for science and maths, but students pointed out that it made no sense to invest in technology without first ensuring that the basic provisions of the school building were up to scratch. As fourteen-year-old Elen wrote to Blishen:

> It's all very odd. We have a brand-new language laboratory, with a film-projector affair which shows cartoons with French commentary on a T.V. screen, but our textbooks are falling to pieces. We have several large science laboratories that are clean enough to perform brain-surgery in, while our lavatories are usually minus chains or minus door-locks or minus toilet-paper or minus all three.[37]

Even the minority of children and adolescents who occupied more 'modern' buildings might have found that, despite the efforts of the designers, they did not suit their priorities and needs. One particular point of conflict was the focus on the flow of the teaching situation rather than the students' own physical comfort. In 1970, Tom was a fourth-form student at the direct grant boys' grammar school Haberdashers' Aske's in London, which had moved site in 1961 because the facilities at its previous site had been deemed unsuitable by the Ministry of Education.[38] In a collection of young people's essays published by the IoE in 1970, he criticized the rationale behind its separate subject blocks, indicating a sharp grasp of the principles underlying its construction:

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[35] IoE, DWA, WRI/2/1/66. Class Q76 scripts – Chiswick Grammar School. Grammar (mixed) – Form 1, unstreamed (1966).

[36] G. Clegg, 'Education', Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society <https://brentfordandchiswicklhs.org.uk/search-discover/chiswick-history-homepage/education/> [accessed 28 July 2020].

[37] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 47.

[38] 'History of Habs Boys', Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School, <https://www.habsboys.org.uk/about-us/about-us> [accessed 7 May 2021].

> it was a new school, and had been specially designed to 'lift psychological pressure' off the students. The designers had not included corridors in the plan, connecting the classrooms. They say that corridors put the students in a state of depression. Instead the classrooms' doors lead straight outside, so you have to go outside of the building to change rooms. This is alright when it is fine, but when it is pouring, it is absolutely unbearable.[39]

Open-plan buildings also often denied young people another of their consistently expressed wishes: they wanted a private space of their own where they could retreat during the school day to socialize with peers or simply be by themselves. The lack of space could be a particular issue for girls, who were more likely to prefer to stay indoors during break-time for private chats with their peers. As fourteen-year-old Janet wrote to Blishen, 'We would not be thrown out at lunchtime but would be allowed to go somewhere to sit and talk.'[40] A group of girls writing in *Spare Rib* in 1980 pointed out that 'In an average comprehensive school, younger students are particularly discriminated against … They are virtually locked out of rooms except for lesson time, and have nowhere to go except crowded, cold, noisy places'.[41] Being forced out into the playground rather than having space, like the teachers, to socialize privately – the majority of schools had staffrooms by the 1960s – further underlined the inferior status of children and adolescents.[42]

Teachers and power relationships

While buildings and facilities were a key concern for children and adolescents who attended post-war English and Welsh schools, the way they were treated by their teachers, and the power they possessed within the school's hierarchical structure, was an equal priority. Some respondents to Blishen's 1967 competition explicitly emphasized that power relationships were more significant than the space within which they were taught. 'S', a fifteen-year-old boy, wrote:

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[39] DWA, WRI 2/9/1, 'The way I think, write and act' (1970), p. 12.

[40] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 156.

[41] [Anon], 'Finding each other… young women in schools and clubs', *Spare Rib*, xcv (1980), 19–21, at p.19.

[42] DES, *Children and Their Primary Schools*, p. 389, noted that 65% of primary schools had staffrooms by 1962, and these figures were likely higher for secondary schools.

> My main complaint is that we have so little say in school affairs. Naturally the boys who are allowed most say are those who have conformed to school ideals and regulations … On the whole there is less need for radical changes in school organization – it makes little difference if lessons are held under a tree or in a skyscraper.[43]

These, however, were not the views held by post-war child-centred educationalists. Unlike some inter-war progressives and the radical minority of 'deschoolers' who arose in Britain and the US in the 1970s, they had little interest in giving students more formal power within the school.[44]

Power imbalances in schools weighed especially heavily upon students of colour, who experienced institutional racism within the school setting. Students of West Indian or African origin tended to be stereotyped as 'loud' and troublesome.[45] South Asian students were pigeonholed as unrealistically ambitious, if they were boys, or passive and oppressed, if they were girls. In an autobiography he wrote in 1971, fourteen-year-old Intiaz described his London secondary school experience so far, remembering how he had had to prove his intelligence. Initially, he was confined to a lower set, but he was saved by writing a poem which 'proved itself imagative [imaginative] to the teachers … That poem expressed full force of my Brain and transford [transferred] to a better line of class … But I know I will not stop their, I will move on to better things which will make this place look like trase [trash] from the Dustbins.'[46] South Asian girls encountered stereotypes about their own limited horizons and familial expectations, as Pratibha Parmar and Nadira Mirza wrote in *Spare Rib* in 1981, quoting a range of female South Asian students. They noted that English as a Second Language (ESL) lessons were compulsory for Asian students in some schools, even those who were born in Britain, and when Muslim girls campaigned to wear shalwar [traditional trousers] in school, the schools refused their demands by claiming they were being pressured by their parents, 'so that the school then takes on the role of the girls' saviour against their religion and tyrannical parents'.[47] Societal racism already weighted the scales against young people of colour, so it was unsurprising that schools reproduced and reinforced these hierarchies.

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[43] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 18.

[44] Tisdall, *Progressive Education*, pp. 42–3.

[45] G. Evans, 'Those loud black girls', in *Learning to Lose: Sexism and Education*, ed. D. Spender and E. Sarah (London, 1988, 2nd ed.), pp. 183–90; D. Humphrey and G. John, *Because They're Black* (Harmondsworth, 1971).

[46] C. Searle, ed., *This New Season: Our Class, Our School, Our World* (London, 1973), p. 149.

[47] P. Parmar and N. Mirza, 'Growing angry, growing strong', *Spare Rib*, cxi (1981), 18–21, at p. 20.

In secondary modern schools, frequent changes of teacher cemented the impression that working-class students were being passed off with poor staff who were not invested in their jobs and could not be bothered to see out the school year. The Newsom Report noted that 'Of the teachers who were on the staff when the students entered the schools in 1958, only half the women were still there in 1961, and about two thirds of the men', and quoted some observations from the students themselves: 'teachers came and went like water'; 'There was always a change of teachers in my form. That's the reason most of us were uninterested and glad to leave.'[48] This was backed up by the essays submitted to Blishen, with sixteen-year-old Janet writing that in her ideal school 'the staff would have to be prepared not to leave in the middle of the year, as they seem to – at least, in my present school'.[49] Again, these concerns weighed especially heavily upon black and ethnic minority students, who suspected that classes with a large proportion of students of colour were assigned to the most incompetent or junior members of the teaching staff.[50] One black student at a secondary modern school, interviewed by the sociological researchers Derek Humphrey and Gus John in the late 1960s, said 'The teachers in my school need to be sitting in with the class and being taught. We seem to be landed with a load of teachers who have just got through their teacher training. Sometimes I wonder how some of them did it.'[51]

Students also emphasized that they wanted to be treated as adults by their teachers, especially once they had entered adolescence. A consistent complaint in the quotations from fifteen-year-old students in the Newsom Report was that they were 'treated like children'.[52] This was also a frequent refrain in the essays submitted to Blishen. Judith, who was thirteen, wrote that in her ideal school 'The relationship between teacher and student would be changed … both teacher and student would learn together', while fourteen-year-old Eveline thought that 'The students should be treated as people, and not as if they had no right to breathe in the same air as the staff.'[53] Symbols of subordination, such as uniform, were consistently resisted, especially by girls, although a minority of students preferred wearing a uniform because they felt it led to greater equality among the student body.[54] Such complaints were voiced by students at the time but were not taken seriously. The Newsom Report, despite being at least partially sympathetic to adolescents' concerns when they fitted the report's priorities, suggested that: 'They [the students] are not necessarily grown-up or logical in the reasons which weigh heavily with them: "I left school at fifteen because of all this discipline and because the school uniform was navy blue" is a not untypical statement.'[55]

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[48] DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 66.

[49] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 141.

[50] C. Griffin, *Typical Girls? Young Women from School to the Job Market* (London, 1985), pp. 17–19.

[51] Humphrey and John, *Because They're Black*, p. 25.

[52] DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 15.

[53] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 37.

Primary-aged children were less likely to make explicit bids for equality, but they also recognized their relative lack of power in relation to their teachers and how it affected their time at school, asking instead that teachers exercise this power fairly and transparently, without resorting to physical or emotional violence.[56] Seven-year-old Kirsty wrote to Blishen that she 'would like a school that did not tell you off much and when it did tell you off theyd only tell you what youd done wrong and not to do it again. They only say your nauty you shouldn't have done it but quite often we dont know what weve done wrong.'[57] In the NCDS essays, a number of the respondents imagined becoming better schoolteachers themselves when they were twenty-five. One girl wrote that 'I would not pick one girl out of the class as she would be called the teacher pet, I would give everyone a chance to go messagges for me … I would be fair and only put work on the wall if it was good not because I like the girl.'[58] The other option was to imagine oneself on the other end of this unequal power relationship and to revel in it: 'I think it would be nice to be a teacher so I could boss children about'; 'I enjoy being a teacher. There is hardly a few days that pass without I spanking some child.'[59]

As these scenarios revealed, some primary-aged children viewed their teachers as distant, frightening figures. John and Elizabeth Newson's study of seven-year-old children in Nottingham in 1965 did not directly question children about their school experiences, but by interviewing their mothers, they found that the single biggest complaint against teachers was shouting, especially when it formed part of a collective punishment. A soap processor's wife recalled her daughter's distress at the behaviour of her teacher: 'He had them all in the hall, he was telling them all off, and yet she'd done nothing wrong.'[60] Especially for younger children, this kind of emotional violence could be as upsetting as corporal punishment, which they were less likely to experience in school at such a young age. Existing histories of education rarely consider teachers' relationship with their pupils beyond the contested question of physical punishment, but both children's and adolescents' narratives demonstrate how significant these relationships were.[61]

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[54] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, pp. 146–8; DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 65.

[55] DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 69.

[56] This reflected parents' attitudes to physical punishment by teachers in both the inter-war and immediate post-war periods. cf. H. Barron, 'Parents, teachers and children's well-being in London, 1918–1939', in *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870–1950: Raising the Nation*, ed. H. Barron and C. Siebrecht (New York, 2017), pp. 137–59, at pp. 144–6.

[57] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 169.

[58] NCDS, 1868. N12535X.

[59] NCDS, 1217. N11296X; NCDS, 1803. N12415Q.

The curriculum, age and child psychology

Child-centred educationalists placed the curriculum front and centre in the school reforms they promoted.[62] Simplified and popularized rules drawn from developmental psychology about when students acquired certain cognitive capacities helped to shape their recommendations for the curriculum. Most significant among these was that both children and 'non-academic' adolescents were only able to engage with topics that were immediately relevant to their own lives.[63] Like school buildings, curricular fashions changed over the course of this period, but the focus on an education that would be practical, realistic and – for adolescents – vocational remained constant across these decades. Vocational education attracted adolescent supporters among both Blishen's predominantly middle-class sample and the working-class adolescents questioned in the research for the Newsom Report.[64] Angela, thirteen, said that in her ideal school, she would 'go around asking the students what they would like to be when they grow up' and tailor their curriculum accordingly, whereas Stephen, also thirteen, suggested that 'When boys came to the school they would be asked what they were particularly interested in' and that subjects would be designed around that interest.[65] However, the students' versions of this kind of vocational education were centred on individual choice; in reality, vocational education in secondary modern and comprehensive schools could confirm class and gender stereotypes by directing students towards unskilled and gendered occupations.[66]

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[60] Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old*, p. 73.

[61] A. Burchell, 'In loco parentis, corporal punishment and the moral economy of discipline in English schools, 1945–1986', *Cultural and Social History*, xv (2018), 551–70.

[62] Tisdall, *Progressive Education*, p. 38.

[63] Eg, H. C. Dent, *Secondary Modern Schools: an Interim Report* (London, 1958).

[64] DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 114.

[65] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, pp. 88, 90.

Grammar school students who wrote to Blishen reflected child-centred recommendations by being highly critical of the formal education that they frequently received. Thirteen-year-old Stephen described a dull maths lesson in his grammar school: '"Right then, get on with pages seventy-two to seventy-six". The heads bow down and pens begin to scratch. A few poor boys, still not understanding, sit waiting anxiously for the bell'.[67] Sixteen-year-old Nicola imagined being taught by a succession of lecturers who made the lessons engaging and treated the students as equals, with one, Chris, overseeing 'an animated political argument' about Georgian history, but at the end of her account, 'I walk along the road in a daze, my dream fading, slowly coming back to reality and my grim, Gothic-fronted grammar school.'[68]

Nevertheless, the recipients of a more child-centred education, who tended to be working-class students in secondary modern or comprehensive schools, were not always especially enthused by it. Primary-aged children, who experienced more educational change on average than their secondary-aged counterparts across this period, were more likely to take no interest in curricular changes at all or to fall back on more traditional educational preferences. Child-centred shibboleths about the natural interests and abilities of seven- to eleven-year-olds promoted practical and active methods such as project work. However, this approach was not always received positively by primary school students. Eleven-year-old Isabel, another of Blishen's respondents, wanted an 'old-fashioned' school, stipulating that:

> It would *not* have about six projects a term – only about one. The reason for this is that I get very tired of having to bring newspaper cuttings, matchboxes, etc., to school every day, and knowing that by the time we have finished one project, there's always another looming up.[69]

This 'hands-on' approach also did not suit eleven-year-old Lalage, who argued that 'This school would only have people like me who like writing stories and poetry ... There would be no handwork and we'd have maths without the problems.'[70] Nine-year-old Gaye had clearly experienced a more practically orientated form of primary education, but it still did not fit what she was actually interested in. In her ideal school, she wrote 'We wouldn't make silly stuffed animals for babies we would make mod clothes for our dollies. We would be taught how to drive a car and sensible things like that, how to cook nice things not fish.'[71]

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[66] Tisdall, *Progressive Education*, pp. 164–5.

[67] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 58.

[68] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 72.

[69] Emphasis in original. Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 73.

[70] Concrete mathematics was seen as a more 'realistic', child-centred way of teaching maths. Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, pp. 35–6.

Specific child-centred innovations were often explicitly resented by secondary modern or comprehensive school students, even when they were the kinds of innovations that grammar school students had longed for. The Newsom Report noted multiple complaints about debates from working-class students who were not confident in articulating their ideas in a school setting: 'But when they say to you "What do you think?" well, there's nothing to say and you begin to dread discussion lesson in case he asks you for your opinion and you don't know anything about the subject.'[72] Girls could feel especially challenged by this kind of discussion-orientated approach, because they were less likely to speak up in class than boys.[73] The HMI Survey *Girls and Science* (1980) highlighted that 'hands-on' approaches in science that relied on the students asking questions and working out things for themselves could disadvantage girls, who lacked the practical knowledge that boys acquired at home; one female student wanted 'all-girls [science] classes' because 'you tend to feel overshadowed in a class, especially by boys who tend to have a better flair for the subject. This makes you feel embarrassed or stupid about asking for something to be explained.'[74] Co-educational secondary schools became the norm by the 1970s, with less than a third of state secondaries remaining single-sex, but as this statement indicates, this did not necessarily break down gender stereotypes. Indeed, social scientist Rosemary Deem argued that girls were less likely to take maths and science subjects in co-educational schools, which might suggest why a minority of Blishen's female respondents – but none of his male respondents – preferred single-sex education.[75]

In terms of curriculum content, students could be explicitly wary of being presented with lessons that were supposed to be relevant to their own lives. This was evident as early as the 1950s, when the secondary modern school girls interviewed in later life by Stephanie Spencer remembered the pointlessness of their domestic science lessons.[76] However, another version of this critique emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s, when schools tried to tackle the 'problem' of their supposedly underachieving West Indian students by introducing West Indian culture into the curriculum, bolstered by the introduction of CSEs in 1962, which allowed teachers to design Mode 3 syllabuses.[77] These innovations were backed by sociological work that suggested that black and ethnic minority students felt alienated from the school environment because it was not connected to their actual lives.[78]

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[71] Blishen, *School That I'd Like*, p. 169.

[72] DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 73.

[73] Tisdall, *Progressive Education*, p. 232.

[74] DES, HMI Survey, *Girls and Science* (London, 1980), p. 18.

[75] R. Deem, *Women and Schooling* (London, 1978), p. 43.

[76] S. Spencer, 'Reflections on the "site of struggle": girls' experience of secondary education in the late 1950s', *History of Education*, xxxiii (2004), 437–49.

Black students did not always take kindly to having their own heritage served up to them by white staff. Four West Indian adolescents, all born in England to Jamaican parents, spoke about their frustrations to a white interviewer from the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in the late 1970s. One particular complaint centred on a cookery lesson where they had been tasked with making Jamaican patties:

> C. It's just Cornish pasties. It was just minced meat and onions and you put it in the frying pan and cook it and then you put oxo on it and that's supposed to be Jamaican Patties.
>
> Int. Didn't the teacher ask you how you made them?
>
> C and D. No.
>
> D. She told us how to do it when we… *know* how to do it. But when we did it *her* way it came out like English food. And it's supposed to be *Jamaican* patties.
>
> C. And all the other things we make are English food.[79]

For these reasons, young people of colour might resist the use of their culture and heritage in the classroom, preferring to keep school and home life separate. However, it was not only the misuse of culture that students disliked; while students still held so little power in the school, token gestures of inclusion meant very little, even if they were respectful.[80] A white teacher who was in charge of a majority black class in London reflected in 1978 that, when he had tried to introduce 'relevant' material such as poems by Linton Kwesi Johnson, a black Brixton poet, 'On two occasions I was quietly warned off by students – "This is ours, not for school." '[81] These warnings reflected black students' resistance to being culturally assimilated into the school system during a period when the desirability as well as the feasibility of being both 'black and British' was still contested, but they also allowed the students to exercise agency within a system that did not usually offer them genuine choice about what they were taught.[82]

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[77] DES, *West Indian Children in our Schools* [Rampton Report] (London, 1980), p. 36.

[78] M. Stone, *The Education of the Black Child in Britain: the Myth of Multiracial Education* (Glasgow, 1981).

[79] Emphasis in original. Stone, *The Education of the Black Child in Britain*, pp. 10–11.

[80] R. Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964–1985* (Oakland, 2018), p. 159.

[81] Emphasis in original. [Anon], 'White teacher, black class', *Teaching London Kids*, xi (1978), p. 17.

Truancy and school refusal

One methodological difficulty when looking at what kind of school post-war children and adolescents wanted is that certain voices tend to be historically privileged over others. Some contemporary sociological studies focused on uncovering the voices of working-class students and students of colour, but the larger archival collections used in this chapter tend to over-represent white middle-class students.[83] In this context, it is worth considering one particular strategy for rejecting school that did not require the student to explain his or her reasons: refusing to go. While we cannot assume that all students who skipped school did so because they were primarily motivated by a hatred of the institution, it is worth highlighting this physical resistance to a system that had supposedly been designed to promote the welfare of its attendees.

In the inter-war period, as Nicola Sheldon has argued, school attendance officers, originally employed by LEAs to identify and punish truants, rethought their role in the context of the growth of educational psychology, social work and child guidance, emphasizing support and help for the family rather than punitive measures. By 1939, they had renamed themselves 'education welfare officers', or EWOs.[84] Recognizing that working-class children from what had now been christened 'problem families' were most likely to be persistently absent from school, a range of professional bodies now situated truancy in a sociological context. Analyses of the phenomenon took less interest in the individual behaviour of the offenders, preferring instead to investigate their family background and immediate environment – what a 1947 Ministry of Health survey termed 'the neighbourhood problem'.[85] Studies of truancy, such as Maurice

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[82] Essays by black young people from 1979 to 1984 in *Black Voices: an Anthology of ACER's Black Young Writers Competition*, ed. P. McGilchrist (London, 1987) address the 'black and British' question.

[83] P. Corrigan, *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (London, 1979); R. White and D. Brockington, ed., *Tales Out of School: Consumers' Views of British Education* (London, 1983); Griffin, *Typical Girls*.

[84] N. Sheldon, 'The school attendance officer 1900–1939: policeman to welfare worker?', *History of Education*, xxxvi (2007), 735–46.

[85] N. Sheldon, 'Tackling truancy: why have the millions invested not paid off?', *History and Policy*, 3 Feb. 2009 <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/tackling-truancy-why-have-the-millions-invested-not-paid-off> [accessed 29 July 2020].

Tyerman's 1958 examination of 137 truants who had been charged in court, often explicitly refused to even consider that the school itself could be a factor that motivated the truant.[86]

From the late 1950s onwards, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists started to take an interest in a particular subset of truants which, they argued, called upon their specific professional expertise. These 'school phobics' or 'school refusers' usually had strong academic and behaviour records, unlike 'typical' truants, and came from a wide range of class backgrounds. They were further distinguished by their somatic symptoms, which could lead them to appear genuinely ill at the thought of going to school, and by the sudden onset of their absences. Nevertheless, it was argued that school itself remained completely irrelevant in these cases. The psychoanalytic and psychiatric literature focused on the child's relationship with their family, arguing that these children were often neurotic and over-protected, unable to confidently separate from their mothers.[87]

Discussions of individual school refusers cited by psychodynamic therapists across this period indicate that children often voiced criticisms of school when discussing school refusal, but these were dismissed by adult observers as being insufficient to explain their persistent and lengthy periods of absence.[88] Their behaviour continued to be ascribed to abnormal personality development rather than concrete worries, despite recurrent complaints emerging among sufferers. Susannah Davidson, who had treated thirty cases at child guidance centres in London and Ilford, thought that school refusal was 'a manifestation of family disturbance'. Nevertheless, she recorded concerns about the transfer to grammar school among her patients in an article published in 1960, as well as bullying and, in the case of one eight-year-old girl, 'sexual interference at school'.[89] L. A. Hersov noted in the same year that some recurring worries among the fifty cases he had treated at the Maudsley were 'fear of a strict, sarcastic teacher', 'fear of ridicule, bullying, or harm from other children' and 'fear of academic failure'.[90] In a later article in the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*) in 1972, he argued that these fears were 'irrational' and 'inexplicable' because 'the average child' stops being afraid once 'a threatened beating from the class bully' or 'an impending examination' is over. He recommended that referral to a child psychiatric service should be considered if school refusal persisted.[91]

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[86] M. J. Tyerman, 'A research into truancy', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, xxviii (1958), 217–25.

[87] E. Klein, 'The reluctance to go to school', *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, i (1945), 263–79; M. Chazan, 'School phobia,' *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, xxxii (1962), 209–17.

[88] G. A. V. Morgan, 'Children who refuse to go to school', *British Psychological Society Annual Conference*, 1959; L. A. Hersov, 'Persistent non-attendance at school: refusal to go to school', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, i (1960), 130–6; S. Mitchell and M. Shepherd, 'The child who dislikes going to school', *BMJ*, xxxvii (1967), 32–40.

[89] S. Davidson, 'School refusal as a manifestation of family disturbance: its structure and treatment', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, i (1960), 270–87, at pp. 274–5.

[90] Hersov, 'Persistent non-attendance', p. 137.

As school refusal became a more prominent clinical category by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the desire of different professional groups to defend their territory meant that children's concerns continued to be viewed solely through the lens of familial or psychological problems. Diana Leigh, a social worker, wrote in to the *BMJ* in 1972 to criticize Hersov's article because he had made no mention of the role of social services, whom she thought were key in dealing with school refusers because of the long waiting list to be seen by a psychiatrist.[92] Three child guidance workers in Berkshire objected to this, arguing that it was important that these children came under their remit because the 'true "school phobe" is an emotionally disturbed child' who did not 'suffer from social problems'.[93] Finally, an EWO retorted that they were most likely to be involved with such cases because the child would often not interact with social workers or child guidance workers at all; 'they are not only school refusers but "clinic refusers"'.[94] As these relatively new professional groupings used the school refuser as way of staking a claim, there was little space for any critique of the school itself, as that would indicate that the solution lay beyond the remit of these professions.

This professional bias was further confirmed by work conducted by the child psychologists John and Elizabeth Newson in 1965 in Nottingham, where they noted that children under nine were twice as likely as children over nine to refuse school, and yet they had been ignored by psychiatrists and social workers because 'they are less likely to be seen as in need of special psychiatric help because they refuse something they don't like'.[95] Five per cent of the Newsons' sample of seven-year-olds had refused school in the past year and eight per cent since they started school, although these children would not necessarily have been classified as long-term school refusers.[96] Again, primary-aged children's concerns about school re-emerged in their reasons for school refusal, although these were rarely taken seriously by adults. A milkman's wife recalled that 'The other week he came home and said "I wish I could fall down and cut me." I says "Why?". He says, "I wouldn't have to do PE this afternoon!" '[97]

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[91] L. A. Hersov, 'School refusal', *BMJ*, iii (8 July 1972), 102–4, at pp. 103–4.

[92] D. Leigh, 'School refusal', *BMJ*, iii (22 July 1972), 236.

[93] N. Morton-Gore, W. C. King and P. Trafford, 'School refusal', *BMJ*, iii (12 Aug. 1972), 419.

[94] B. H. Burne, 'School refusal', *BMJ*, iii (23 Sept. 1972), 764.

[95] Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old*, p. 50.

[96] Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old*, p. 54.

Archival evidence from school refusers themselves is extremely limited, but in 1975, a group interview was filmed with eleven school refusers aged twelve to fifteen at the Intermediate Education Centre (IEC) in Stepney, which had been set up to cater for their needs.[98] Initially, this interview was stilted; it was conducted by the class teacher, who fed her students answers and did not give them much space to reply, which meant that their contributions were reluctant and brief. The IEC was about to be reviewed by ILEA at the time, so the teacher's agenda may have been to present a positive image of the school to the local authority, rather than to elicit genuine responses. However, one question led to a sudden flurry of engagement:

> Teacher: Is it like an ordinary school?
>
> [All: No…] Boy 1: In some ways.
>
> Teacher: In what ways?
>
> Boy 1: We do the same work as them … English and maths.
>
> Teacher: But what bits are different, do you think?
>
> [All: inaudible, all speaking at once]
>
> Boy 1: Longer periods … you can take your time.
>
> Boy 2: [Mostly inaudible, but refers to teacher not 'forcing' them to do things]. The only time you force us is when we're not doing anything.
>
> Teacher: Do you think you get more interesting things to do? I think maybe you ought to talk about some of the afternoon activities.

Heavily prompted by the teacher, who clearly wanted to make the case for the distinctive contribution of the IEC, the students went on to discuss the creative activities they had been undertaking, which included tie-dyeing curtains, painting walls and making furniture. Nevertheless, the preceding discussion suggested that, like their counterparts attending traditional schools, they were less interested in curriculum content than feeling that they had control over their own time and were not being coerced by their teachers. Once again, concerns expressed by school refusers linked back to worries that a broader range of children had about school. However, because school attendance had become so firmly established as an indicator of children's welfare, it was assumed by professionals that children could not possibly be refusing school because it was not good for them.

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[97] Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old*, p. 55.

[98] 'Basement News', London Community Video Archive, CVA0047 (1975) <http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/videos/599d5b844f697f3307f2184f> [accessed 11 Sept. 2020].

Conclusion

In Shoko Yoneyama's research on school refusal, or *tôkôkyohi*, in Japan since the 1980s, she argued that Japanese school refusers surveyed by the 'free school' Tokyo Shure in 1989 found it difficult to explain what was wrong because they were 'responding to the composite effects of school, i.e. not just study, not just student bullying, not just petty rules, not just corporal punishment, but the whole system constituting the social environment of school in which all of these are intertwined'.[99] While the Japanese school system placed exceptional pressures on its students from the 1980s onwards, conformity and discipline were also promoted in the post-war British education system, even in those schools that were deemed to be becoming more child-centred. One of the MMEC respondents reflected upon the experience of being part of this kind of institution in 1964, when they were aged fifteen, and how differently they were treated at their part-time job:

> At school I am one of a crowd just as everyone else. I have to wear the same clothes and learn the same things. We are all carbon copies of one another. As soon as we get home we all become individuals … At school I am told what to do without any really solid reason for it but at work I am treated as an individual who is part of a team and I am given reasons for things.[100]

Primary and secondary school students' writings on education in post-war England and Wales indicate that children and adolescents had different priorities from contemporary educational reformers, despite these educationalists' claims to be 'child-centred'. This disconnect was reflected elsewhere. As Jennifer Crane has shown, emerging concerns about 'children's experience' among other welfare professionals, such as those involved in child protection, did not lead to a fundamental rethinking of how services were delivered.[101] Mathew Thomson has argued that even more radical 'children's rights' campaigns that promoted listening to children's voices found it difficult to maintain their stance 'when it clashed with adult interests and a powerful social belief that children were fundamentally different to adults'.[102]

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[99] S. Yoneyama, 'Student discourse on *tôkôkyohi* (school phobia/refusal) in Japan: burnout or empowerment?', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, xxi (2000), 77–94, at p. 92.

[100] MMEC, WRI 1/1/7, 3 of 3, 36/637.

[101] J. Crane, *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Experience, Expertise and Emotions* (Basingstoke, 2018), pp. 60–6.

The failure of schools to take children's views into account was not an omission that could be easily addressed, but an assumption that was inherent in the fabric of an institution that compelled people of a certain chronological age to attend. Post-war schools consistently returned to the assertion that children and adolescents, unlike adults, needed schools to address their emotional and social deficiencies – to promote their 'welfare' – and in this context, it was difficult to make the argument that children and adolescents had valuable insights to contribute. In the end, therefore, perhaps students' particular problems with the schools that they attended were less significant than the multiple ways in which schools marked them as less important and less individual than their adult counterparts, as one boy famously articulated in the introduction to the Newsom Report when he was asked what he thought about his school's new buildings. ' "It could all be marble, sir," he replied, "but it would still be a bloody school." '[103]

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[102] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 225.
[103] DES, *Half Our Future*, p. 2.

9. Making their own fun: children's play in high-rise estates in Glasgow in the 1960s and 1970s

Valerie Wright

This chapter explores where children played on high-rise estates in post-war Glasgow, with particular emphasis on the 1960s. In this decade, widespread urban redevelopment in the form of inner-city slum clearance and new housing estates resulted in significant societal change at both a national and local level in the UK. This was a period of transition in which community and family life was being reconstituted.[1] The modern high-rise block was steadily replacing the traditional working-class dwelling throughout the decade. These physical changes in the built environment had important consequences for everyday life for individuals of all ages. For children this had particular implications. The speed with which high-rise blocks could be constructed and the pace of physical change in the city resulted in the re-emergence of earlier fears that 'living high' would have adverse effects on child welfare. Central to these concerns was the question of where children could play and how the lack of play space would affect their well-being and development.[2]

A renewed emphasis was placed on the welfare of children in the post-war decades with an increased interest in childhood mental health immediately following the Second World War.[3] The work of John Bowlby and Anna Freud on the separation of children from their parents and the consequences of child evacuation became influential in shaping understandings of child development. Bowlby's books on 'attachment theory', which emphasized

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[1] L. Abrams et al., *Glasgow: High-Rise Homes, Estates and Communities in the Post-War Period* (London, 2020); J. Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me: the Search for Community in Post-War England* (Oxford, 2019).

[2] Report of the Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee on Social Needs and Problems of Families Living in Large Blocks of Flats, *Living in Flats* (London, 1952), pp. 10–13; see also: M. Willis, 'Living in high flats', 'Symposium on High Flats: Part 1', held at RIBA on Tuesday 15 Feb. 1955, *RIBA Journal* (March 1955), 203–4.

[3] A. Davis, *Pre-School Childcare in England, 1939–2010* (Manchester: 2015), pp. 4–5, 25–73.

V. Wright, 'Making their own fun: children's play in high-rise estates in Glasgow in the 1960s and 1970s', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 221–46.

the centrality of the mother–child bond, became best-sellers.[4] Professionals also placed increasing emphasis on the potential legacy of early childhood experiences in determining the life chances of the adult. These ideas had important consequences for public understandings of what constituted 'normal' child development. In this context, publications by government and reformers made play, and the opportunity to play, central to ensuring children's physical and mental well-being and 'normal' development.[5]

In spite of these concerns, Mathew Thomson suggested that children's lives were curtailed and became less 'free' as a result of post-war planning.[6] In the many new housing estates and redeveloped inner-city areas throughout the UK, adults sought to keep children safe by providing them with designated space that was theirs. This could take the form of the neighbourhood play area or, for the very fortunate who moved to houses, their own private garden. They were no longer free to play where they liked. Through adult eyes, the professionally designed playparks and spaces provided by the local authority were preferable to 'unsafe' streets, roadsides and liminal 'in between' spaces such as waste grounds and other brownfield sites. In this analysis, Thomson drew on Colin Ward's influential *Child in the City* in portraying the restricted place of children, and especially boys, in the changing landscape of post-war Britain.[7] Children's own narratives were, however, largely absent.

This chapter places such narratives at the centre of its analysis. It explores children's agency in the new environment of the modern high-rise housing estate in two locations in Glasgow in the 1960s and 1970s, the Gorbals and Castlemilk. Working-class children were the objects of adults' concerns in the archival sources, as high-rise housing attracted attention from a range of professionals studying a period of profound social change. The under-fives were a particular focus of professional and parental concern in terms of the long-term effects of early childhood experiences and 'normal' development.[8] This chapter re-analyses residents' questionnaires and other research materials that contributed to social science researcher Pearl

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[4] Davis, *Pre-School Childcare in England*, pp. 57–63.

[5] Lady M. Allen of Hurtwood, *Planning for Play* (London, 1968), pp. 11–17; Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1961), pp. 39–43 and esp. para 176.

[6] M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: the Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013); C. Ward, *The Child in the City* (London, 1978), esp. pp. 133–51, 184–222.

[7] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*; Ward, *The Child in the City*, p. 218.

[8] J. Maizels, *Two to Five in High Flats*: *An Enquiry into Play Provision for Children Aged Two to Five Years Living in High Flats* (London, 1961).

Jephcott's *Homes in High Flats*.[9] This project was conducted between 1967 and 1971 and was the first large-scale investigation into the social effects of high-rise flats in the UK. These archive materials are re-analysed to focus on children's experiences and behaviours.[10] By reading against the grain, it is evident that children actively shaped their environments through their play and were able to make use of the space around where they lived. Jephcott also made attempts to capture children's responses to high-rise through observation, which provides an important, albeit mediated, insight into how children were perceived to be using space. In the *Homes in High Flats* archive there is also material produced by children themselves in response to tasks set by their teachers at the request of Jephcott, which provide evidence of children's own concerns. Finally, the chapter will draw upon oral history life narrative interviews with former residents reflecting on their experiences of childhood play in these two high-rise locations in the 1960s and 1970s. These sources suggest that, despite the contemporary concerns of parents and professionals relating to the lack of provision, children were able to make their own fun and find places and games to play.

High-rise, children and play

Glasgow Corporation, as the local authority in the city was known, vigorously adopted high-rise as a solution in the early 1960s given the city's long-term housing shortage and resultant inner-city tenement 'slums'. In 1951, the newly appointed Corporation architect, A. G. Jury, had estimated that 186,000 new houses would need to be built in the city in order to demolish and rebuild the overcrowded districts as well as clear the existing housing waiting list.[11] As a result, there were proportionately more high-rise blocks built in Glasgow in the 1960s than any other city in the UK.[12] This construction was central to the city's dramatic comprehensive development strategy, which aimed to clear and reconstruct twenty-nine areas of the city. Initially, high-rise was designated for use in these areas, but latterly they were also constructed in gap sites, brownfield former industrial sites, on municipal golf courses and in existing peripheral estates. This construction was a powerful visual symbol that showed Glaswegians that the Corporation was solving the housing shortage. As David Gibson, housing convenor, stated in 1962:

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[9] P. Jephcott and H. Robinson, *Homes in High Flats: Some of the Human Problems Involved in Multi-Storey Housing* (Edinburgh, 1971). University of Glasgow Archives (UGA), 'Records of the study-Homes in High Flats, c1960s', DC127. For more on Jephcott see: J. Goodwin and H. O'Connor, 'Introduction to Special Issue: Pearl Jephcott: reflections, resurgence and replications', *Women's History Review*, xxviii (2019), 711–27.

[10] The re-analysis of 1960s social science research is a fruitful avenue of inquiry as relatively recent work by sociologists and more recent work by historians highlights. M. Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: the Politics of Method* (Oxford, 2010); Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me.*

[11] A. J. Jury, *Development Plan, 1951* (Glasgow, 1951), p. 43.

[12] The peak of Glasgow's high-rise drive was around 1964–72. M. Glendinning and S. Muthesius, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland* (London, 1994), pp. 220–46.

> In the next three years the skyline of Glasgow will become a more attractive one to me because of the likely vision of multi-storey housing rising by the thousand ... The prospect will be thrilling, I am certain, to the many thousands who are still yearning for a home. It may appear on occasion that I would offend against all good planning principles, against open space and Green Belt principles – if I offend these it is only in seeking to avoid the continuing and unpardonable offence that bad housing commits against human dignity. A decent home is the cradle of the infant, the seminar of the young and the refuge of the aged![13]

Gibson's political background in the Independent Labour Party ensured that housing was his priority. He had a revolutionary zeal for improving living standards for the working classes of the city. While Gibson acknowledged the Scottish Office's (the representatives of the UK government based in Edinburgh) competing interest in preserving greenbelt land, in his opinion it was more important to provide the additional housing that the city desperately needed. However, Gibson's good intentions would result in long-term problems. The failure to take 'good planning principles' into account, such as the provision of infrastructure and amenities, would cause significant inconvenience for many of Glasgow's high-rise residents.

The Scottish Office was also concerned by the scale and speed of high-rise construction in Glasgow.[14] This was not only about the quality of construction but also fears about the long-term implications of the relocation of thousands of the city's inhabitants to live in high-rise blocks. The Scottish Office therefore provided the impetus for *Home in High Flats*, in that the study aimed to consider 'some of the human problems involved in multi-storey housing'.[15] Given the scale of the housing shortage in Glasgow, Gibson had insisted that two-bedroom flats should be built in high blocks throughout the city to accommodate families. In the 236 existing blocks in Glasgow in 1967 there were approximately 8,000 to 9,000 children under the age of nine.[16] In the same year, the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee stated that 'by far the most serious problem is to provide adequately for the recreational needs of children living in the flats'.[17] One of Jephcott's tasks was to provide recommendations on how this could be done. She also became especially concerned about the effects of 'living high' on children and the long-term implications for their social and educational development.

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[13] Glendinning and Muthesius, *Tower Block*, p. 220.

[14] Glendinning and Muthesius, *Tower Block*, pp. 244–6; Scottish Housing Advisory Committee, Sub-Committee on Housing Management, *Housing Management in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1967), pp. 51–3.

[15] The Scottish Office had direct links to Prof Douglas Robertson at the University of Glasgow through the Scottish Development Department, with Robertson securing funding through the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Foundation. Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, pp. v, 2.

These were pre-existing concerns among UK government departments. As early as 1952 the Central Housing Advisory Committee had commissioned a sub-committee to produce a report on families living in large blocks of flats, which found that 'There is much evidence from tenants themselves that the need most keenly felt by mothers in blocks of flats is "somewhere safe for children to play" '.[18] Recommendations were made as to the amount of space that should be designated for children's play and the sort of facilities that should be provided. The construction of housing intensified in the 1950s, mostly of low-rise houses or flats. Municipal authorities across the UK also increasingly experimented with high-rise construction, with this becoming more established in the early 1960s, largely as a result of the London County Council. In 1961, anticipating continued construction, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government set out minimum space standards for new housing and its surroundings in *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*. However, it was suggested that it was difficult to plan play spaces because 'the importance of play in the normal development of the child is not yet fully understood'. Yet, at a basic level it was suggested that 'all children need the opportunity to play with other children, space in which to play in safety, and something to play with'.[19]

As increasing numbers of new council housing estates were constructed across Britain, the relationship between opportunities for play and 'normal' child development attracted increasing attention. Various ministries of the UK government commissioned research on children's play requirements. Again, there had been earlier research in the 1950s with particular reference to flats, such as L. E. White's 1953 study of the outdoor play of children living in flats.[20] More research was published in the 1960s on high-rise in particular. Joan Maizels' *Two to Five in High Flats* funded by the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust and published in 1961 provided a basis for all subsequent research on the limitations placed on children's play by 'living high'.[21] Maizels' decision to focus on young children suggests that her work was influenced by child psychology and welfare professionals' research. Indeed, Maizels found that young children, under five years old, rarely got out to play as their mothers could not let them out by themselves. There was nowhere they could play unsupervised, either inside or outside the flats, and as a result they were 'hemmed in' and it was 'too restrictive a life for them'.[22] Maizels found that some mothers were concerned that their children would lack the socialization of other children, would be lonely and shy and would be emotionally behind their peers.[23] Maizels made several age-specific recommendations that were echoed in subsequent reports: separate play facilities for children of different ages; indoor play spaces for children under five (such as play groups); and outdoor activities for older children.[24]

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[16] UGA, DC127/15/5, 'Notes on problems connected with provision for children's play'.

[17] Scottish Housing Advisory Committee, Sub-Committee on Housing Management, *Housing Management in Scotland*, p. 52.

[18] Central Housing Advisory Committee, *Living in Flats*, p. 11.

[19] Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, para 176.

Lady Marjorie Allen of Hurtwood, a pioneer of adventure playgrounds in England in the 1950s and an acknowledged expert in the field of children and play, also discussed the types of play facilities children preferred in *Planning for Play* published in 1968. In this comprehensive book she singled out high-rise, specifically the Red Road flats in Glasgow, as 'a kind of psychological pollution', a place where 'a lift hall is their only playground'.[25] She described children who 'lived far off the ground' as being 'denied the chance to explore and play in freedom'.[26] Lady Allen was concerned about the long-term effects of such a constrained childhood. If children were not able to play with other children, take risks and learn to be resilient then what kind of adults would they become? Pearl Jephcott shared this concern. She asserted, quoting the adult questionnaire respondents, that high flats were 'nae use for the bairns' and described multi-storey life as 'somehow alien to the children'.[27]

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[20] L. E. White, 'The outdoor play of children living in flats', in *Living in Towns*, ed. L. Kupur (London, 1953), pp. 235–64.

[21] Maizels, *Two to Five in High Flats*.

[22] Maizels, *Two to Five in High Flats*, pp. 12, 23.

[23] Maizels, *Two to Five in High Flats*, pp. 12–13, 22–3.

[24] Maizels, *Two to Five in High Flats*, pp. 25–7. See eg: W. F. R. Stewart, *Children in Flats: A Family Study* (London, 1970); P. Jephcott, *Young Families in High Flats* (Birmingham, 1975); J. Littlewood and A. Tinker (Department for the Environment), *Families in Flats* (London, 1981).

[25] Hurtwood, *Planning for Play*, pp. 14–15.

[26] Hurtwood, *Planning for Play*, p. 14.

Children's play in Glasgow's high-rise: Queen Elizabeth Square and Mitchellhill

Responses to Jephcott's questionnaire can be re-analysed in an attempt to locate working-class children's experiences through adults' accounts of their behaviour. This close reading will focus on two contrasting case study areas selected for their differing geographical locations within the city: Queen Elizabeth Square in the inner city and Mitchellhill on the periphery. The resident questionnaires primarily provide evidence of adult perceptions of relocation and experience of living in high-rise. However, Jephcott's interest in the restrictions placed on children's ability to play ensured that she included a section entitled 'The Children'. Residents were asked where children played and for suggestions on how facilities could be improved. Jephcott employed a team of market researchers to conduct her questionnaire with 1,067 residents in the 163 blocks that existed in 1968–9.[28] At Queen Elizabeth Square thirty-four individuals were interviewed and fifty-one at Mitchellhill.[29] Both men and women were interviewed. Some respondents were parents with children living at home, others were living alone or were older adults whose grown-up children had left home.

Queen Elizabeth Square was integral to Glasgow's first Comprehensive Redevelopment Area in the Gorbals, arguably Glasgow's most notorious inner-city area.[30] The existing four-storey tenements were demolished and replaced with brutalist high-rise blocks designed by Sir Basil Spence. Influenced by Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, the blocks were built on pilotis with amenity space underneath.[31] However, Spence's derivative blocks did not have the facilities for children that were included

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[27] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 80.

[28] UGA, DC 127. Questionnaires are archived in ten boxes, which are not sorted in any particular order, but as found when deposited: DC 127/1-10. All subsequent references to the questionnaires relate to this reference. Respondents are anonymized at the request of the archive. I have included individuals' ages, marital status and the ages of children where appropriate.

[29] UGA, DC 127/1-10.

[30] J. Clark and V. Wright, 'Urban regeneration in Glasgow: looking to the past to build the future? The case of the "New Gorbals"', in *Urban Renewal, Community and Participation: Theory, Policy and Practice*, ed. J. Clark and N. Wise (New York, 2018), pp. 45–70.

[31] Pilotis, made famous in the modernist era of architecture by Le Corbusier, are columns of iron, steel or reinforced concrete supporting a building above an open ground level.

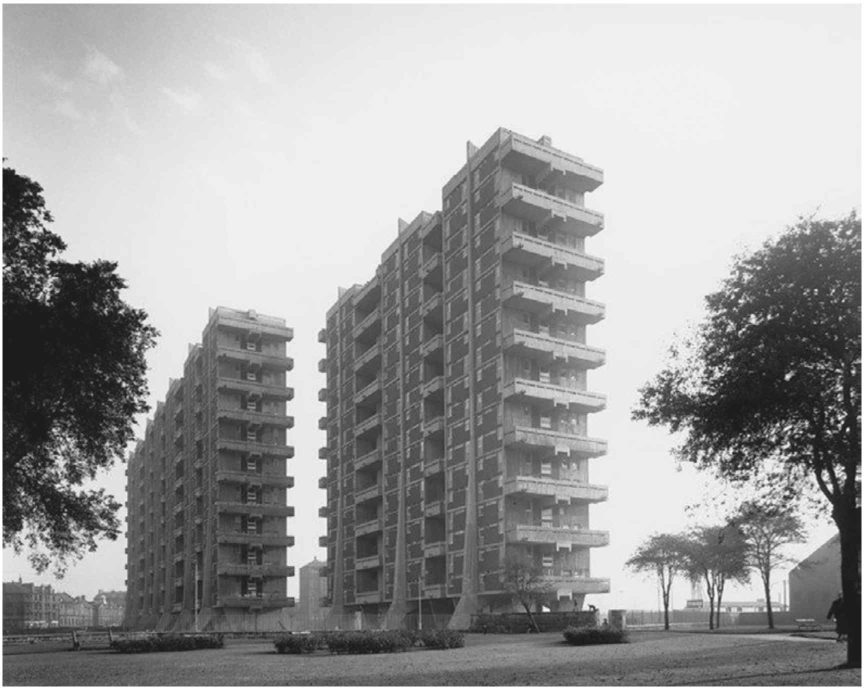

Figure 9.1. Queen Elizabeth Square pictured shortly after completion in 1965.

Source: Historic Environment Scotland, Spence, Glover and Ferguson Collection, SC 1052294.

in the original. There was no children's play area and no 'kickabout' for football (small red ash pitches found in many of the housing estates in Glasgow). There was a play area across a busy road from the blocks and another more 'modernist' playground within the wider housing estate.

Castlemilk is one of Glasgow's four peripheral housing estates built on the edge of the city in the 1950s, comprising mainly modern four-storey tenements. In the 1960s, Glasgow Corporation decided to add three areas of high-rise flats. Mitchellhill was approved in 1963 and was completed only two years later in 1965 by construction firm Wimpey using mass systems building prefabrication techniques. The row of five twenty-storey blocks was located on the southern edge of the estate next to the Cathkin Braes.[32] This was an isolated, almost rural location, with a working farm on one side. Mitchellhill was also separated from the rest of the housing estate by

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[32] 'Brae' is a Scottish word essentially meaning 'a steep bank or hillside'.

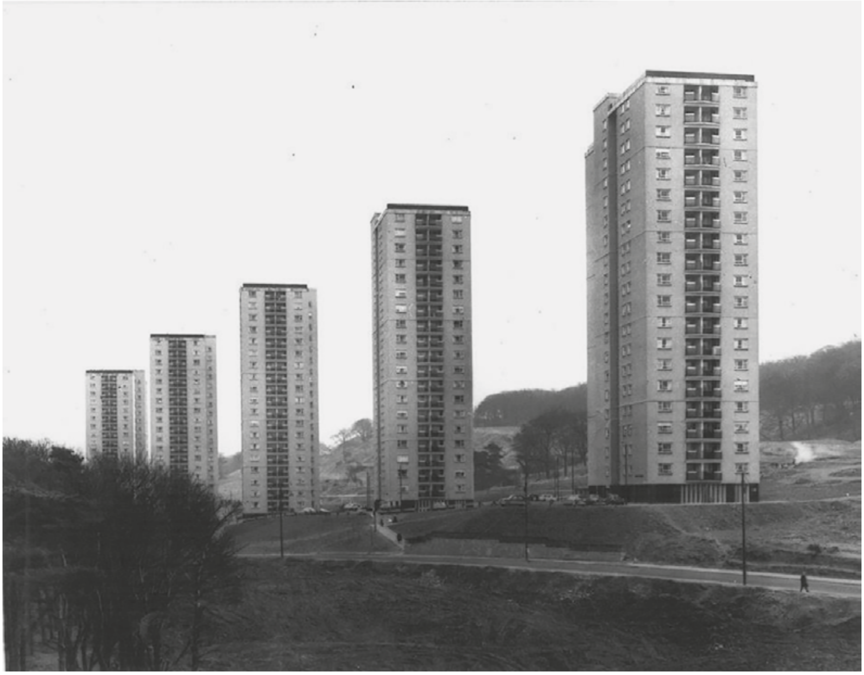

Figure 9.2. Mitchellhill in Castlemilk.

Source: University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, Records of the study 'Homes in High Flats', GB248 DC127/22.

a busy road. Older children had the freedom of playing in the forest areas on the braes, there was a small red ash football pitch for the older boys and eventually there was also a small play area behind one of the blocks for younger children.

The overwhelming response to Jephcott's questions on children's play from residents in both locations was that there should be playgrounds for all ages as there was 'nowhere to play' at the blocks. However, it would seem that play provision was not a priority for Glasgow Corporation. In spite of the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee's concerns regarding children's ability to play, not to mention the contemporary discourses on the importance of play to child development, the Corporation's primary focus was the construction of housing.[33] In both the redeveloped Gorbals and in Castlemilk, residents waited years for the construction of schools, shops and community centres. Children's play areas were even further down the list of priorities. While older children were able to find their own places to play, for younger children this was more difficult. Age was an important factor in determining children's agency. Residents articulated very similar views to the participants in Maizels' research in London in relation to children under five years old. Young children had to be accompanied out to play as they could not reach the buttons on the lift. Parents could not leave such young children unsupervised to play outside because if anything happened, or their child was being bullied, they could not get down in the lift or stairs quickly enough to help.[34] For practical reasons, this age group were seen as being particularly vulnerable. There was a perception among adults in both Queen Elizabeth Square and Mitchellhill that pre-school children were shut indoors.[35] Parents feared that their children's lack of play opportunities 'holds them back' developmentally.[36] The focus on the early years of childhood among child welfare professionals and the ways in which this entered public discourse perhaps influenced respondents' views. There is no evidence to suggest how the children themselves felt.

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[33] Abrams et al., *Glasgow*, pp. 66–78.

Residents living in high-rise in both locations suggested that there should be increased provision for 'wee ones' under five years old. It was especially important that young children should be able to play 'safely out of the way of traffic' in 'enclosed' spaces.[37] Concerns about busy and 'dangerous' roads were evident among residents in both locations.[38] This also applied to older children who were more likely to be crossing roads to find places to play beyond the immediate area of the high-rise blocks. Indeed, Thomson suggests that increasing car ownership, and with it child fatalities and injuries, resulted in restrictions being placed on children's movements in urban space.[39] It was no longer judged safe for children to be allowed to roam freely and especially cross roads without adult supervision. From the late 1960s, residents in both the Gorbals and Mitchellhill raised concerns about the increasing risks associated with traffic, drawing on both their own experience and local media coverage of child injuries and fatalities.[40]

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[34] UGA, DC 127/1-10.

[35] UGA, DC127/1/1-10. In the Queen Elizabeth Square questionnaires, 20 respondents suggested that the under-fives only played indoors with eight suggesting they had nowhere to play at all. In the Mitchellhill questionnaires, 13 respondents suggested children only played indoors and two suggested they had nowhere to play.

[36] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 28-year-old married mother of three children under the age of five years old.

[37] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 42-year old married man, Mitchellhill; 30-year-old married woman, four children aged nine, eight, four and two years old, Hutchesontown; 57-year-old widow living with two grown-up sons in their thirties, Hutchesontown; 32-year-old married woman, two children aged eight and five years old, Hutchesontown.

[38] Ten residents at Queen Elizabeth Square mentioned how busy the road or traffic was, with eight making similar comments at Mitchellhill.

[39] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 133–51.

Adult residents at Queen Elizabeth Square described children over five years old playing in the paved areas, footpaths, roads and carparks surrounding the blocks. There was no grass to play on and relatively few children played in the local play park.[41] This provides a fairly bleak impression of the opportunities for play. Some older residents suggested dedicated play areas for children to 'take them off the streets' and 'away from the doors'.[42] The desire to provide play areas could also be read as enclosing and demarcating space for children as Thomson suggests. These adult responses also give a sense of where children played when there was theoretically nowhere for them to play. The doorways, entrance halls and spaces surrounding the blocks, which were not designed to be used for play, were used for this purpose. This is evidence of older children's agency in subverting spaces that adults thought of as unsuitable for play.

At Mitchellhill, adult residents also overwhelmingly suggested that there should be more play facilities near the blocks and several residents mentioned the need for swings in particular. As was the case in the inner city this was not just about keeping children safe. It was also hoped that increased provision would keep the children busy as 'there's too many kids about the entrance' and 'there wouldn't be so much damage done to the blocks if they could go to a playground'.[43] These concerns were not unwarranted. A group of University of Glasgow graduate social science students, observing play on a summer night in Castlemilk, found ninety children out playing around the blocks and 'not even half a dozen adults' to supervise them.[44] Jephcott concluded that the lack of play facilities combined with boredom and with no adult supervision could result in so many children becoming 'a law unto themselves'.[45] Indeed, a sixty-four-year-old widow blamed the parents for letting children 'run wild' as they can't keep an eye on them'.[46]

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[40] *Gorbals View*, Oct. 1970; *Castlemilk Press*, Jan. 1973.

[41] UGA, DC 127/1-10.

[42] UGA, DC 127/1-10, 82-year-old widow; 65-year-old widow.

[43] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 41-year-old single man; 57-year-old married woman.

[44] UGA, DC127/15/1, 'Observation' sheets addressed the question: 'what use do children make of the open space provided outside of their homes?' Carried out by graduate social science students, covering multiple estates including Castlemilk circa Feb. 1967.

[45] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 87.

[46] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 64-year-old widow, Mitchellhill.

Other residents also complained of destruction, vandalism and the noise of children playing. Again, an alternative reading could be to suggest that the children were making the best of the resources they had available to them. The adults' responses do not specify what 'destruction' or 'vandalism' had occurred. Nevertheless, children were highly visible, out and about around the blocks, taking up space and enjoying themselves playing.

The residents at Mitchellhill also commented on the need for particular play facilities for boys. Perhaps this was because the nearby kickabout was already dominated by older boys who, according to some residents, would not let younger boys have access to the space.[47] Again, age was an important factor in determining which children could access the designated spaces for play, with older children frustrating the attempts of the Corporation to provide facilities that would serve children of all ages. Jephcott also related stereotypical representations of Glasgow boys as having a 'reputation for physical violence' because they had to learn to be tough in the back-courts of the tenements.[48] Mothers in Mitchellhill had witnessed this first hand, suggesting that their sons 'could do with a sports club', a 'boys brigade' or scouts.[49] Such organized and disciplined activity would provide an alternative space to avoid fighting, bullying and destructive behaviour in the area around the flats.[50] In addition, given the public moral panic over gang violence in Glasgow's peripheral estates in the 1960s, perhaps parents in Mitchellhill were anxious to keep their sons busy with sports and group activities to avoid the lure of gangs when they were older.[51]

Meanwhile, Jephcott noted that 'no one seemed to have thought about girls' needs as regards their type of play'.[52] At Mitchellhill only one woman, who did not have children, suggested that 'The girls need some kind of playground or play field. The boys have a football pitch'.[53] There was no comment on the needs of girls or boys in particular at Queen Elizabeth Square. The domination of older boys in designated play spaces provided by Glasgow Corporation was largely unchallenged.

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[47] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 35-year-old married woman, three sons aged ten, five and one year old, Mitchellhill.

[48] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, pp. 87–8.

[49] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 29-year-old married woman, four-year-old son, Mitchellhill.

[50] The 'Boys Brigade', a Church of Scotland youth organization for boys, had taken this role in working-class neighbourhoods in Scotland since 1883 <https://boys-brigade.org.uk/our-history/> [accessed 20 April 2020].

[51] A. Bartie, 'Moral panics and Glasgow gangs: exploring "the new wave of Glasgow hooliganism", 1965–1970', *Contemporary British History*, xxiv (2010), 385–408.

[52] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 136.

[53] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 36-year-old woman, no children, Mitchellhill.

Concerns of residents were therefore surprisingly similar in both areas in spite of their differing locations in the city. In both locations, residents were particularly concerned about the lack of play provision for children under five years old, which echoes earlier government findings and those of Maizels. Some parents had also picked up on public discourses on 'normal' child development and the need for socialization through play and were worried their children were disadvantaged by living high. For older children, with the exception of the focus on provision for boys at Mitchellhill, the only other difference was adult perceptions that older children living in this high-rise estate had more freedom as a result of the semi-rural setting. They could go wandering and play on the grassy slopes leading to the Cathkin Braes and in the forest areas beyond. This was considered 'healthy for the kids'.[54] Queen Elizabeth Square's concrete brutalism and location nearer the city centre resulted in a perception among adult residents that older children were more restricted in their use of space. However, in both areas children can be located in the adult responses to the questionnaire, which give a sense of where children played and what use they were able to make of the space and resources available to them. Nevertheless, this does not tell the full story. Children's own views, in their own words, are also necessary to understand just how suitable high-rise was as a place to grow up and play.

Where did children want to play?

As well as interviewing adult residents through the questionnaire, Jephcott gathered material created by children to determine their opinions on living in high-rise, where they played and where they would like to play. It is important to consider the means by which this material was collected and therefore the ethical implications of its re-use. During her research, Jephcott attempted to compare the health and educational development of working-class children living in high-rise with their contemporaries living in more traditional forms of housing. This line of inquiry was not pursued because findings suggested that 'there was no evidence that children's health suffered' and that there was no social 'retardation in the multi-storey group'.[55]

In this context, Jephcott sought cooperation from primary schools in order to access children's views on play. University researchers had access to the children's school records and their creative work without the consent of the children or their parents or guardians. This was the result of unequal class-based power dynamics. Working-class children had little power to avoid being the object of concern, however well-intentioned or justifiable. At the same time, Jephcott's actions enabled these children to make their opinions known, providing them with agency as creators of evidence. The resulting archived material in the form of drawings and essays is rich and illuminating. Nevertheless, this chapter will draw on the essays that Jephcott published in *Homes in High Flats*, which have been available to the general public since 1971.

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[54] UGA, DC127/1/1-10, 29-year-old married man, three-year-old son, Mitchellhill.

[55] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, pp. 94, 96–7. Also see UGA, DC127/15/5, 'Information gathered to determine the effect of multi-storey homes on the development of pre-school child, including children's medical reports'; UGA, DC127/16, J. R. Holland, 'A comparison between primary school children living in multi-storey housing, and those living in low-level housing' (unpublished University of Glasgow PhD thesis, 1968), p. 63.

In these essays, older children, aged between five and ten years old who lived in high-rise in Glasgow, described playing in similar locations to those described by adult respondents, including at the 'enterance' and 'I play on the ground floor.'[56] The children liked to play in places with 'no glass or gangs', which suggested a lack of maintenance and the misuse of play areas by teenagers in the evenings.[57] Children had also presumably internalized the warnings of their parents relating to the dangers of cars and traffic and knew to avoid busy roads as 'you mite get nocked down'. Jephcott also drew upon the notes made by the University of Glasgow social science graduate students when observing play around high-rise estates. The findings echoed earlier studies of children's use of playground facilities, with static objects like tunnels and climbing frames in concrete and metal not being particularly well used, except in the case of slides.[58] Jephcott also found that when children were not at school any equipment that moved was nearly always busy, as were the boys' kickabouts. Perhaps these preferences suggest that children liked play equipment which they could have some form of control over; it was not aesthetic values that were important for children but function.[59] Perhaps the Mitchellhill residents' emphasis on swings was understandable when Jephcott's evidence suggests that this may have been just the sort of equipment that the children themselves desired.

There were obviously differences between where children played and where they would like to play. In reproducing these extracts, Jephcott notably retained the children's original spelling and grammar (reproduced here). These are their words and their ideas of an 'ideal playground':

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[56] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 85.

[57] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 85.

[58] UGA, DC127/15/4 'Information gathered by the social science students concerning high rise living'. See also: V. Hole (Ministry of Technology, Building Research Station), *Children's Play on Housing Estates* (London, 1966), pp. 12–19.

[59] R. Kozlowsky, *The Architectures of Childhood: Children, Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Postwar England* (London, 2013), pp. 47–93, esp. pp. 50–1.

> I like football but when you stay in the high flats you cant get playing football, because all the big boy's dont let you play they like to take your ball of you and play with it. Why dont they do it to boy's the same age as them, I hope we can get grass pitches for boy's of eight and eleven, and we all hope that the goals will have nets. We all like playing football but if the big boy's would leave us we would enjoy it but if they dont we will not enjoy ourselves. Some of the girls like to play tennis if they got tennis courts for the girls that would make them happy, and we all hope they get the little children swings and a sand pit for them that would keep them happy.[60]

This extract illustrates the tensions between boys of different ages in accessing the football pitches provided by the Corporation. An age hierarchy, enforced through bullying and violence, seems to have been integral to how these spaces were used. As parents and other residents had also suggested, the efforts of Glasgow Corporation to improve children's welfare were undermined by the actions of these older boys. Yet, the reference to the absence of nets suggests that the Corporation's efforts were also limited. The preference for grass as opposed to the red ash pitches, which were far more common in Glasgow, highlights the Corporation's attempt to keep maintenance costs down. This response was also gendered as there was no suggestion that girls would be permitted to play football or access these spaces. Instead, girls required separate provision in the form of tennis courts. Yet, this boy was at least considering the needs of girls whereas the vast majority of high-rise residents and Glasgow Corporation did not seem to. The use of the phrase 'that would keep them happy' in relation to swings and a sandpit for 'little children' also reads like an adult opinion overheard, and perhaps shows how widely the absence of facilities for younger children was felt in the community. This may also be evidence of this boy's maturity in thinking about the needs of those younger than himself.

The way in which these young writers perceived the absence of facilities for girls is again in striking contrast to the majority of high-rise residents in Mitchellhill and Queen Elizabeth Square. One boy wrote:

> Where I live there is no where to play, except for a long stretch of concrete, a hill that leads to the other block and a number of other things. We are not even allowed to play on the grass, that means we cant get a game of football without getting chased of. […] I think the grass should be open for the public use. The corporation should find some workers who will make swings and make a decent football pitch and things for the girls as well as us boys. The sheds have signs saying NO LOITERING and NO FOOTBALL. I agree with the first

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[60] Jephcott does not provide details of where these children lived and which high-rise estate. Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 86.

> sign. But not the second. There should be a chute, swings and a grassy place and the signs should be taken down. Just now there is a play group for children up to five. I don't think this is right, my young sister goes but she is almost five. She has only been going a few weeks. I think that the corporation should send a few more people to take the older ones. It will cost money but I think the public would give some money as it will be for their childs sake. I also think that the caretakers should help. If this is done the flats would be pleased.[61]

This writer acknowledged that boys could break the rules to play football on the grass, but this was not considered to be an option for girls. Signs protecting grassed areas and garages from children's play were an infamous feature of housing estates across the UK. Such demarcation of space into proper and improper use have become legendary in accounts of growing up in post-war Britain. There were rules to be followed, as well as caretakers and neighbours to be avoided. That this boy accepted 'no loitering' was interesting. Perhaps, in his opinion, football and play had a purpose that meant they should be permitted. His requests were fairly straightforward in focusing on traditional play equipment such as a chute (as slides are known in the West of Scotland) and again swings, grass and a 'decent football pitch', which highlights the clear lack of provision for children in Glasgow. His other points relating to the age restrictions placed on the playgroup are more complicated, especially when he suggests that 'the public' could fund this and that the caretakers could help for 'their childs sake'. Jephcott's experiment with establishing a playgroup in a high-rise block in Royston in Glasgow highlighted that funding and staffing were both insurmountable issues.[62] The phrase 'the flats would be pleased' is also a nice illustration of how children conform to adult agendas where their interests are aligned. This arguably was a particular form of strategic agency. He chooses to feature issues that the adults in the flats would agree with, but that are also a priority for him.[63]

In other extracts, gendered play and access to facilities were also evident with one younger girl suggesting that she liked 'to play with my mums dresses and high heels and my other frends do that as well I woul ofen play at houses with them'.[64] Such imaginative play contrasts with the active games pursued by boys, and potentially reinforced the gendered hierarchies of working-class family life in 1960s Glasgow. Interestingly, she also suggested that she 'would like to play with pepol that are frendlay and dont fight with each other and dont talk scrufy'; she also liked 'places that are tiddy and not all papers about'. This gives an indication of the levels of fighting and bullying among children, as well as the litter and lack of maintenance of communal areas in high-rise estates. An older boy also described the absence of provision, but referred to the facilities that the community expected to be constructed: 'we are getting a grass football field and swimming baths and tennis courts, but even that's going to take a lot of time and hard work'.[65] Children living in high-rise estates had, like their parents, come to terms with the fact that they would have to wait for amenities. The use of the phrase 'but even' suggests aspirations for more. As the chapter by Jonathan Taylor using writing by London-based children also suggests, children were aware of the important role that local government played in delivering welfare services.

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[61] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, pp. 86–7.

[62] B. Hazley, et al., '"People and their homes rather than housing in the usual sense": locating the tenant's voice in Homes in High Flats', *Women's History Review*, xxviii (2019), 728–45.

[63] S. Miller, 'Assent as agency in the early years of the children of the American Revolution', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, ix (2016), 48–65, at p. 49.

[64] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, pp. 85–6.

These extracts were undoubtedly selected for publication because they supported Jephcott's argument. Yet, they also provide a clear sense of children's thoughts about play, how they used space and the barriers they had to overcome to be able to play. In these accounts, the authors are very much 'experts on their own lives' and provide evidence of what Pooley and Taylor describe in the Introduction as the 'everyday meanings of their own welfare'.[66] The writers' suggestions for improvement illustrate the nuanced nature of children's opinions on what they wanted from their environment, as well as a tacit acknowledgement of how their aspirations were restricted by limited resources. The older boys seem to know that Glasgow Corporation cannot afford to staff playgroups or construct facilities quickly or without 'hard work'. Collectively, the aspirations of the children are limited. There was no utopian idealism, but rather pragmatic requests for nets in the goals and for litter and glass to be cleared. Children recount the effects of bullying but with no suggestions of how to solve this problem. The older boys acknowledged that play provision was gendered, even though adult residents seemed unconcerned by this. Children's requests for play workers or leaders had also been overlooked by adult residents.

Memories of 'living high' – where did you play?

Jephcott wondered 'what sort of "I remember, I remember" picture of his early life in a multi-storey will be drawn by the man who writes his autobiography in the 2020s?'.[67] She was concerned about the long-term implications of a childhood 'living high'. By conducting oral history life narrative interviews with people who had grown up in Mitchellhill and Queen Elizabeth Square in the 1960s and 1970s, former residents were encouraged to reflect on their childhoods in this context. When recounting strongly gendered childhood experiences of play, individuals placed an emphasis on their freedom and initiative rather than the restrictions placed upon them. With nostalgia and pragmatism, they compared their childhoods with those of contemporary 'indoor childhoods'.[68]

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[65] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 85.

[66] Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me*, p. 6.

Just as prioritizing children's voices in the archive is important, so too is hearing the first-hand accounts of individuals who grew up in high-rise. Interviews took a semi-structured life narrative format. There was a rough thematic interview schedule, taking people from their early childhood to the present day and involving reflections on their life. However, the individuals providing the narratives were given the space to talk at length about the topics that mattered to them. Many of the respondents were particularly comfortable and enthusiastic in talking about where they played, often actively defending their childhoods in high-rise. This is significant given the subsequent negative reputation and stigma that many high-rise estates in Glasgow have acquired in the intervening years, as well as on-going critiques of flats as inadequate for young children.[69] Ten interviews were conducted in 2015, five with former Mitchellhill residents, four with former Queen Elizabeth Square residents and one joint interview with two colleagues, who had grown up in each of these estates.[70] All were born between 1952 and 1969 and came from working-class backgrounds as determined by their parent(s)' occupations.

The memories of growing up in Queen Elizabeth Square and Mitchellhill were largely positive, especially when interviewees recalled childhood play. However, the age at which an individual moved to high-rise shaped their experiences and opinions. Helen, who moved to Queen Elizabeth Square in 1965 when she was eleven years old, from a tenement nearby, stated that there was nowhere to play:

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[67] Jephcott and Robinson, *Homes in High Flats*, p. 81.

[68] L. Karsten, 'It all used to be better? Different generations on continuity and change in urban children's daily use of space', *Children's Geographies*, iii (2005), 275–90, at p. 285.

[69] Abrams et al., *Glasgow*, pp. 1–35, esp. pp. 18–21.

[70] In the total sample, 26 individuals were interviewed over four case study areas. See Abrams et al., *Glasgow*, p. 25. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Glasgow, College of Arts, in March 2015 (Ref 100140071). Participants could choose whether to use their own name or a pseudonym. All of the participants cited here chose to use their own name. I have used only their first name in the text and citations with initials for surnames being used where required.

> There was nothing there for the kids that was taken into consideration at the time. Considering how many kids were there. There was a park across the road, but again if you wanted your kids to go to the swing park and they were little you had to go with them. It was all the older kids allowed out on their own who met up in the swing park.[71]

As the responses of adult residents in the late 1960s suggested, older children had more autonomy to get out to play, while younger children had to be taken over the busy road and supervised. Helen saw the issue of play from an adult perspective in this sense, but this perhaps also suggests that as an eleven-year-old girl there was no specific provision aimed at girls her age. She had little memory of going out to play herself at this age as there was nowhere for her to play. This quotation also suggests the demarcation of space within the playpark between the younger children taken by their parents and the older children who seemed to dominate. As residents' complaints in the late 1960s indicate, this hierarchy was seldom challenged by younger children or their parents.

Others who were younger when they moved to Queen Elizabeth Square remembered early experiences of trips to the playpark quite differently. Brian, who moved to Queen Elizabeth Square in 1965 when he was five years old, suggested that his mother got to know a lot of people 'because ae the amount of kids they very quickly got to know each other because we, as ah say, in the summer months like pretty much aw the mother's'd be sittin' roon at the swing park wae the kids playin and they'd aw be sittin' talkin'.[72] Taking the children out to play was also an opportunity for socializing for the mothers. Similarly, Paul, whose family had moved to Queen Elizabeth Square in 1965 when he was a baby, spoke of his mother taking the kids to play in this playpark and it being 'sort of like a wee flat trip. We would go en masse'.[73] Catherine also had very fond early memories of playing in this park which contained a slide, roundabout and swings, stating 'it wis excellent' as the 'chute' was so high.[74] Working outside the home did not prevent their mothers from taking them; all three recounted their mothers working 'split shifts' as cleaners in the nearby nautical college. Paul remembered 'so many women' working there in order to be able to work in the early mornings and evenings and care for their children during the day. For those children whose mothers worked during the day, access to the park would certainly have been more limited.

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[71] Interview with Helen (9 Sept. 2015).

[72] Interview with Brian (21 May 2015).

[73] Interview with Paul (4 Nov. 2015).

[74] Interview with Catherine (3 June 2015).

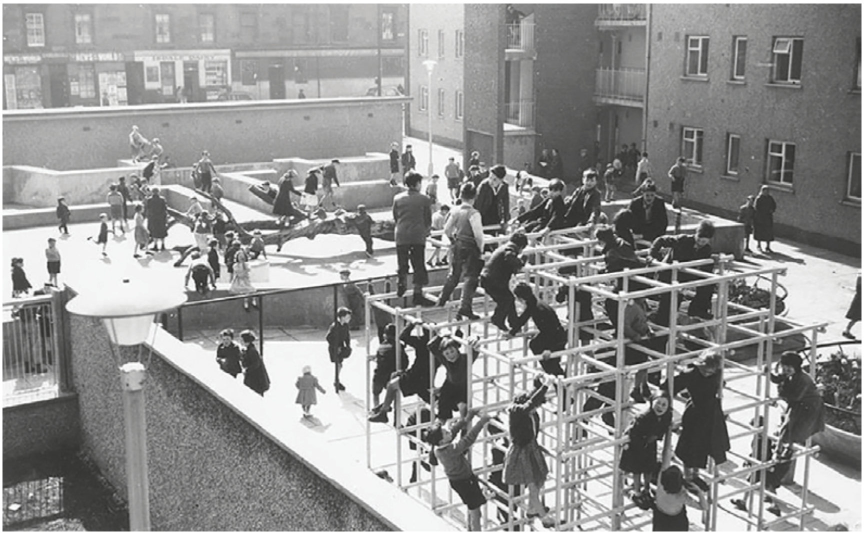

Figure 9.3. 'The jumps', a 'modern' experimental playground.

Source: Glasgow City Archives, Department of Architectural and Civic Design, Post-war housing no.2, D-AP9/7/30/6.

As children outgrew this traditional playpark, they would travel further afield and play at 'the jumps', a planned play area in another part of the redeveloped Gorbals. The play equipment closely resembled the sort of modernist play areas found in post-war housing estates across the UK.[75] The architectural profession increasingly took into account the changing attitudes to child development and the importance of play. Playgrounds like 'the jumps' arguably provided a safe space for children to build resilience in terms of 'risky' play, which Hurtwood suggested was essential for children.[76] Paul remembered 'the jumps' creating what he described as 'a sense of bravado' and compares it with parkour, suggesting that the children became 'like acrobats'. Crucially, the jumps enabled the children to take risks and challenge themselves: 'Go on – do it – do it – jump it – and you did'.[77] In contrast to Jephcott's findings that children were not keen on static play equipment, according to Paul the children of the

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[75] See Hole, *Children's Play on Housing Estates*.

[76] Although such planned playgrounds remained a far cry from the adventure playgrounds advocated by Hurtwood. Hurtwood, *Planning for Play*, p. 17.

[77] Interview with Paul (4 Nov. 2015).

Gorbals made good use of their brutalist playground when they were too big for the swings and were looking for a bit more adventure. Figure 9.3 shows 'the jumps' on a busy day, crowded with children of all ages with few adults in view. Presumably the younger children were in the care of older siblings. The risky play described by Paul is evident on the tree trunk at the rear of this photograph with children also jumping from the concrete walkways behind.

As they got older, Paul and Brian also gained more agency over where they played and began exploring the wider area. Paul described copying older children in 'trying to get in to' a council nursery shed where there was lots of greenery near the local play area.[78] Both boys also had the freedom to just wander about. Brian remembered jumping walls and fences to play football in the school playground when it was closed. He would also explore old factories where he and his friends would 'go up an' walk the beams, absolutely crazy stuff like'. They would also go down to the river Clyde and 'throw stones at the rats'. As Brian stated, 'ye made yer own fun'. In all cases, Paul's and Brian's parents had no idea what they were up to, but they were trusted not to get into too much trouble or injure themselves. As discussed, older boys were allowed an important degree of control over the spaces they used for play. In contrast, it seems girls were not permitted the same freedom or agency to wander and explore as they grew older. Catherine described being more cautious in her play as her mum only allowed her and her siblings to play in the immediate area around Queen Elizabeth Square where she could keep an eye on them from the window. It is not clear if her brothers were subject to the same rules. Nevertheless, Catherine was not allowed to go to 'the jumps' or to wander around like Brian and Paul. Her mum was worried about the busy roads. She did sneak away sometimes and never got caught, but this did restrict her freedom.[79] Girls were seen as more vulnerable in urban spaces than their male counterparts.

Children would also play among the pilotis (stilts) under the blocks at ground level. This was a space used by boys and girls of all ages, with older boys again indulging in risky behaviour. Paul remembered that 'we would run up the big concrete feet of the flat' or 'play wind catcher' in the space under the blocks where 'you would get your jacket up and out … and literally get taken off your feet because the wind was crazy'.[80] In contrast, Catherine described playing team games that did not require much in the way of toys or equipment such as 'kick the can'.[81] Skipping and 'balls', which involved either hitting a small ball off a wall in an old pair of tights or bouncing two balls off a wall simultaneously, were considered to be 'girls games' while boys played football.[82]

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[78] Interview with Paul (4 Nov. 2015).

[79] Interview with Catherine (3 June 2015).

[80] Interview with Paul (4 Nov. 2015).

At Mitchellhill, the nature of play and the games remembered were much the same, except that, as residents noted in their questionnaire responses, older children could explore beyond the vicinity of the blocks. Tricia recounts that they could 'go out and play in the woods, they thought this was a great thing'.[83] Again, gender was influential and Tricia remembered 'the boys' played up the Cathkin Braes where 'they hung fae trees, they hid swings up there, they'd, well they played at commandoes, eh, aw that kind of stuff'. Tricia and her sister played on nearby grassy slopes and wooded areas rather than the braes because only older boys went up the braes on their own and were allowed by their parents to camp out overnight.[84] John B. moved to Mitchellhill when he was twelve years old from another area of Castlemilk and 'loved the flats' because of the proximity to the braes and adventures collecting eggs, using ferrets, greyhounds and lurchers to go hunting, going fishing 'and all that'.[85] As in the Gorbals, such wandering and exploring was not permitted for girls.

The games played closer to the blocks at Mitchellhill were also gendered. Older boys remembered playing football in the kickabout. All children played 'commandos' in wooded areas close by, if they were not allowed 'up the braes', but girls also 'played at wee shops' or games of 'families', role-playing: 'like you're the baby, ah'm the mummy, you're the daddy'.[86] Eventually, Glasgow Corporation responded to residents' concerns and added a playpark behind the high-rise flats. Lorraine had fond memories of playing on the swings. Only four swings were installed and what she described as a 'moonilogico' so it was 'just total mayhem' with all the kids trying to play. Lorraine remembers that in the summer holidays she and her friend would get up really early to make sure they got a swing. She explained that 'when ye had the swing, that wis you all day' with all the other children waiting round for their turn; 'You had to come off when it was dinner time though, but apart from that they [the children] were out all day'.[87] Such limited resources resulted in rules being established by the children to allocate and govern play. Clearly, older children would be more adept at setting and bending the rules to suit themselves at the expense of younger children. This etiquette, perhaps difficult for adults to comprehend, illustrates the power dynamics between children that were inherent in negotiating access to play equipment.

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[81] This was a group game that could involve lots of participants. Children hid and the first to be able to kick an old can without being seen by the others won the game.

[82] Interview with Catherine (3 June 2015).

[83] Interview with Tricia (30 April 2015).

[84] Interview with Lorraine (17 April 2015).

[85] Interview with John B. (30 Oct. 2015).

[86] Interview with Tricia (30 April 2015).

In all the narratives of individuals who grew up in these two locations, the lack of formal play provision is clear. Yet, so too is their ingenuity as children in making the best of the resources they had, creating their own games and finding spaces and places to play. It is also unsurprising that memories of older childhood are predominant in these narratives, rather than the years under five, given that they had far more agency over their play as they grew up. There was also a certain amount of positive nostalgia evident in these narratives with individuals focusing on the dry, sunny summer days of their childhoods. Responses to prompts on where children played on rainy or winter days were much shorter. Brian described being kept indoors, even on rainy days, as a punishment, while Tricia recalled enjoying the occasions when she could stay inside as she could read, which she loved, rather than having to take her younger sister out to play.[88] No one really wanted to dwell on just how cold it was living in high-rise flats in the West of Scotland in the depths of winter. All participants recounted experiences of ice on the inside of windows as a shorthand to explain the experience and tended to move the conversation on. Therefore, narratives which focused on play were most enjoyable for individuals to recount when these centred on games and fun. There was not as much laughter when individuals recounted their responsibilities in caring for younger siblings or the long boring rainy days stuck indoors or sheltering from the rain and bad weather around the blocks with friends.

The context in which an oral history life narrative interview takes place is also important in shaping how an individual composes their narrative. Most of the individuals providing narratives at some point made a comparison with contemporary childhoods in 2015 in which children were perceived as not wanting, or being allowed, to go out to play. This undoubtedly influenced the emphasis placed on outdoor play in their narratives. Most described playing out 'all day'. As Catherine described, 'we were in our glory' playing outside, 'noo it's computers an' this an' that'.[89] John M. similarly made unfavourable comparisons: 'If you look at it now, our generation, the way we were brought up, we were never in, if you look at the generation now they are never out'.[90] He states that children 'might have more these days but we had the better lifestyle because we had freedom to do what we wanted'; meanwhile, they are 'stuck in houses'. He further suggests that this lifestyle has led to rising childhood obesity, a particular concern among policymakers in Scotland.[91] John M. also blamed parents because children are 'no allowed to do that [go out to play on their own] these days in case you hurt yourself!'. Not all individuals made direct comparisons between their own experience and contemporary childhoods. However, the comparison with the 'backseat generation' whose 'playdates' and 'helicopter parents' prevent them from taking risks was implicit in their narratives of playing outside all day.[92]

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[87] Interview with Lorraine (17 April 2015).

[88] Interviews with Tricia (30 April 2015), Brian (21 May 2015).

[89] Interview with Catherine (3 June 2015).

Conclusion

Individuals who moved to Queen Elizabeth Square in the Gorbals and Mitchellhill in Castlemilk reflected on the collective pragmatism of working-class children living in high-rise estates, arguing that they made their own fun and were resourceful. This was especially true of those who were young children when they moved into high-rise blocks as they had fewer memories of their previous homes and play opportunities with which to compare high-rise. They sought to defend their childhood against critics of high-rise, both past and present, as an inadequate environment for children. Their narratives focus on where they played, the spaces they made their own and the games they played there. There was less attention paid to the absence of amenities. The narratives suggest that working-class children were imaginative in their use of space in high-rise estates, both on the edge of the city and in the inner city. The spaces that could be used for play in these locations were very different and yet individuals' retrospective narratives emphasize their agency. This was central to memories of childhood in both places. Given the shortage of amenities provided by Glasgow Corporation and the dominance of older children in certain spaces such as football pitches, such resourcefulness was a necessity. Moreover, individuals compared their childhood experiences of play favourably with contemporary childhoods, suggesting that they had more freedom. Crucially, they did not characterize their childhoods in the

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[90] Interview with John M. (30 Oct. 2015).

[91] A. Castle, 'SPICe: The Information Centre', *Obesity in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 12–13, 31.

[92] Karsten, 'It all used to be better?'; 'Helicopter parent' <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/helicopter-parent> [accessed 20 April 2020].

1960s and 1970s as being restricted by planning and leading to a loss of freedom. The individuals whose narratives feature in this chapter did not feel disadvantaged by growing up in high-rise in Glasgow, as researchers such as Pearl Jephcott suggested. It is therefore important to acknowledge the opinions and views of those who were once the object of concern.

Children's accounts of welfare as measured through play provision in the 1960s were quite different. They emphasized the lack of facilities and what they would like Glasgow Corporation to provide. Yet, their desires were also restricted by pragmatism. Working-class Glaswegian children were realistic. Requests focused on improved maintenance of existing facilities, clearing of litter and for the promised amenities such as swimming pools to be delivered. Suggestions for more provision for girls such as tennis courts were perhaps more far-fetched given that adult residents were more preoccupied with keeping boys busy and out of trouble. Younger children and adults also identified the unequal power dynamics inherent in the use of play spaces, especially football pitches. However, neither children nor adults suggested solutions to this problem. Given the length of time residents had waited for the Corporation to provide basic amenities following the construction of housing (such as shops in the Gorbals and churches and schools in Castlemilk), perhaps they were well aware that funding would not be readily available for staff to supervise play. The adult residents responding to Jephcott's questionnaire were similarly realistic in their expectations, requesting traditional enclosed play areas with swings rather than experimental adventure playgrounds. Their intention was to keep children, and especially younger children, safe from traffic while also ensuring that children had their own space so they would not hang about around the blocks making noise and being 'destructive'. Ironically, the provision of increased play facilities may actually have challenged children's autonomy to make any spaces, including 'unsuitable' ones, their own. It would perhaps have restricted their agency in roaming about the estate. Working-class children made 'living high' work for them despite, or perhaps because of, the failure of the municipal authorities to provide sufficient formal facilities for play.

In the immediate post-war decades in Britain, an emphasis on the importance of child welfare as an investment in the future coincided with a belief that play was essential to 'normal' child development. Yet, the dramatic social change resulting from comprehensive urban redevelopment resulted in municipal authorities having to make difficult decisions over their priorities at a local level. This was certainly the case in Glasgow where housing construction to clear the 'slums' came first, followed by essential amenities such as schools and churches. Play areas for children were much further down the list, if delivered at all. Nevertheless, children adapted to their new environments in high-rise. Rather than simply accepting how researchers, government reports, or even media narratives characterized childhood in the 1960s, and beyond, it is essential that children's own thoughts and opinions on their lives are integrated into the history of their welfare. This is true in terms of both re-analysing contemporary accounts of children's experiences, and actively seeking out retrospective accounts through oral history life narratives. All of these sources complicate and challenge popular accounts and stereotypes of Glasgow in this period and the fate of the thousands of working-class children who grew up in high-rise. Given the predominance of high-rise in Glasgow's council housing stock and the dominance of council housing in the city as a whole, it was an outlier when compared with other Scottish and British cities. Yet, by examining working-class Glaswegian children's agency in challenging, adjusting to and subverting welfare provision on high-rise estates – and the limits to their power – there are insights that can be further explored elsewhere in the UK and beyond.

10. Teenagers, sex and the Brook Advisory Centres, 1964–85

Caroline Rusterholz[1]

In a 1967 article published in the *Birmingham Post*, a young couple shared their experience of attending the Brook Advisory Centre (BAC), the first centre to provide contraceptive advice for young people in post-war Britain. The 'girl', twenty-one and engaged, explained that she had been sleeping with her fiancé since she was sixteen. She stated that she had had 'a major scare' and phoned a Family Planning Association clinic for help. She was told that they could only see her if she was getting married in the coming three months. Since this was not the case, they directed her to BAC. The 'girl' explained that she was 'apprehensive' before phoning BAC, but was amazed by the reaction on the other end of the line; she was asked about the urgency of her needs and told that 'We're not concerned with whether you have a steady relationship or not'. The client thought that 'that was marvellous: they were concerned with your needs, your real needs, and not to sit in judgement on your morals'.[2]

First opened in 1964 in London for unmarried people over the age of sixteen, the Brook Advisory Centres' aims were 'the prevention and the mitigation of the suffering caused by unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion by educating young persons in matter[s] of sex and contraception and developing among them a sense of responsibility in regard to sexual behaviours'.[3] While a charity, BAC also had a close connection with the NHS; from 1974 onwards, the Department of Health and Social Security retained BAC in an official role as a provider of services. They also offered contraceptive advice and prescribed contraceptives provided by the NHS free of charge, irrespective of age or marital status. My analysis stretches

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[1] The research for this chapter was funded by the Wellcome Trust, grant reference 209726/Z/17/Z.

[2] 'Cases and circumstances', *Birmingham Post*, 5 Sept. 1967, p. 8.

[3] 'Brook Advisory Centre, aims and principles, July 1964', in Wellcome Library, SA/FPA/A13/13 Brook Advisory Centres.

C. Rusterholz, 'Teenagers, sex and the Brook Advisory Centres, 1964–85', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 247–71.

from the creation of BAC in 1964 to the Gillick case in 1985, when the prescription of contraception for under-sixteens without their parents' consent became illegal for a short time. Drawing on archive material, mass media, teenage magazines and oral histories conducted with former clients of BAC, this chapter assesses whether young clients influenced and informed sexual health policy. By focusing on young people's lived experience with voluntary sexual health services, this chapter contributes to two different scholarships: the history of the mixed economy of welfare services in post-war Britain and the history of sexuality.

Recent research has emphasized the continuous role played by voluntary organizations in Britain during the long twentieth century, referring to it as the mixed economy of welfare.[4] Both John Davis and Julie Grier have shown the tensions between local authorities and voluntary agencies that sought to limit urban deprivation and improve childcare provision, respectively.[5] Alex Mold and Virginia Berridge's study of drug users from the 1960s has qualified the relationship between the state and voluntary agencies as one of mutual dependence.[6] Adding to this scholarship on the tensions between the state and the voluntary sector, this chapter focuses on the BAC charity, the first institution to tackle young people's need for contraception and counselling on pregnancy and sexual problems. There had been a long tradition of state resistance to funding sexual health services in Britain. Voluntary organizations such as the National Birth Control Association, which became the Family Planning Association (FPA), provided assistance in areas considered to be controversial, such as birth control, and faced great difficulties in securing state financial support.[7] When the NHS was introduced in 1948, family planning and contraception were not integrated into its responsibilities. In a context where one's marital status remained key to accessing modern methods of contraception, BAC broke with the tradition of condemning unmarried sexual activity and became the main provider of contraception for young people. However, its charitable status posed limits to its scope; a lack of funding prevented it from expanding its services and meeting its clients' needs. Funding from Area Health Authorities greatly differed between local branches, reflecting tensions between the charity and the local authorities.

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[4] J. Lewis, 'Family provision of health and welfare in the mixed economy of care in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries,' *Social History of Medicine*, viii (1995), 1–16; M. Hilton, J. McKay, J.-F. Mouhot and N. Crowson, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013).

[5] J. Davis, 'Reshaping the welfare state? Voluntary action and community in London, 1960–1975', in *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain since 1870: Essays in Honour of Jose Harris*, ed. L. Goldman (Oxford, 2019), pp. 198–212; J. Grier, 'A spirit of "friendly rivalry"? Voluntary societies and the formation of post-war child welfare legislation in Britain', in *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives*, ed. J. Lawrence and P. Starkey (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 234–55.

[6] A. Mold and V. Berridge, *Voluntary Action and Illegal Drugs: Health and Society in Britain since the 1960s* (Basingstoke, 2010).

[7] A. Leathard, *The Fight for Family Planning: the Development of Family Planning Services in Britain, 1921–1974* (London, 1980).

This chapter argues that young people not only became a target for health campaigners but actively used and influenced these services. Practical help with sexual health was a desperate need for them, but it was not merely imposed upon them; young people were therefore not passive users of these services. They moved between different providers that held contradictory policies and ideologies. Before turning to BAC, some consulted their GPs, FPA clinics, friends and magazines, thereby actively trying to find information and gain access to contraception. Friendship was a major source of information for young people, and word of mouth proved crucial in advertising the services. This revealed an intricate network of sexual health knowledge and services that young people navigated, at times confidently and at other times in despair.

In addition, this chapter demonstrates that the building of a trusted relationship between BAC and its clients was crucial not only for the successful running of the clinics, but for the young people who attended the service. Indeed, some young people used BAC services at turning points in their life, when making a decision that had long-lasting implications for their well-being or what Amartya Sen refers as 'human flourishing'.[8] Finding a friendly, non-judgemental and confidential service, a place where they could express their anxieties, fears and emotions, was central for them. Young people valued self-determination and praised a service that took them seriously. Some even went on to work for BAC. However, limits were imposed on their behaviours, and under-sixteens were especially vulnerable to attacks by conservative lobbies.

This chapter also argues that considering the views of young people adds to recent criticisms of the concept of permissive society.[9] The period from the late 1950s to the late 1960s is often referred to as the 'permissive society' in order to describe, among other elements, a loosening of 'moral' attitudes towards sexuality. A 'legislation of consent', to borrow from Marxist sociologist Stuart Hall, was one of the many features of this 'permissive society'; it was marked by the decriminalization of abortion and sex between men in England and Wales (1967), as well as the 1967 Labour MP Edwin Brook's Family Planning Act, which allowed local authorities to provide birth control to all women, regardless of their marital status.[10] In this context, teenage 'sexual promiscuity' was examined intensely amid growing concerns around the spread of venereal disease and the increasing number of teenage pregnancies.[11] For under-twenties, the annual birth rate in England and Wales increased from 34 per 1,000 in 1960 to 48.9 in 1968, peaked at 50.6 in 1971, and then decreased to 26.9 by 1983.[12] Recent research has challenged the idea of the 1960s as a turning point. In particular, Frank Mort has qualified 'permissiveness' as a slippery term, while Claire Langhamer, Mathew Thomson and Thomas Dixon have all argued that the 1950s marked a cultural, emotional and social milestone where new definitions and understandings of the self were created, challenging the chronology of the permissive society.[13]

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[8] A. Sen, 'Capability and well-being', in *The Quality of Life*, ed. M. Nussbaum and A. Sen (Oxford, 1993), pp. 30–53, at p. 31.

[9] A. Aldgate, *Censorship and the Permissive Society: British Cinema and Theatre, 1955–1965* (Oxford, 1991); M. Collins, ed., *The Permissive Society and its Enemies: Sixties British Culture* (London, 2007); J. Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities* (London, 1985); F. Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven, 2010), p. 3.

Historians focusing on youth and sexuality have tended to prioritize the 'problem' young. Pat Thane and Tanya Evans have explored the experiences of unmarried mothers over the twentieth century, foregrounding the relative disadvantage they experienced and the essential work done by voluntary agencies in supporting them. They have identified a discrepancy between public condemnations of unmarried motherhood and the more complex and messy experiences of unmarried mothers, who were often supported by their families.[14] Pamela Cox has traced the development of the juvenile justice system in England and Wales and shown the key role played by voluntary agencies in the sexual policing of ‘problem’ girls.[15] Adrian Bingham, Lucy Delap, Louise Jackson and Louise Settle have focused on child sexual abuse, while Carole Dyhouse has shown how the place of girls and young women in society has always provoked moral panic.[16] These historians have focused on the ‘problem’ young and children as objects of historical analysis. Therefore, there exists a lack of research on ‘normal’ teenagers, with the exception of Hannah Charnock’s work on female teenagers’ sexuality and friendship. Charnock argues that peer relationships were crucial in shaping young women’s views on sex and that sexual meanings were in flux between the 1950s and 1980s. Sexual experience was at once condemned through the trope of the ‘nice girl’ and valued among girls as a form of social currency.[17]

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[10] S. Hall, 'Reformism and the legislation of consent', *Permissiveness and Control: the Fate of the Sixties Legislation*, ed. National Deviancy Conference (London, 1980), pp. 1–43.

[11] C. Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble: Panic and Progress in the History of Young Women* (London, 2013); L. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Basingstoke, 2012).

[12] K. Wellings and R. Kane, 'Trends in teenage pregnancy in England and Wales: how can we explain them?', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, xcii (1999), 277–82, at p. 278. See also B. Gillham, *The Facts about Teenage Pregnancies* (London, 1997).

[13] Mort, *Capital Affairs*, p. 3; T. Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford, 2015); M. Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture and Health in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006); M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: the Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013).

[14] P. Thane and T. Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England* (Oxford, 2012).

An analysis of BAC clientele reveals that while ‘problem’ girls (i.e. unmarried pregnant girls, ‘promiscuous’ girls) did attend the clinic, the majority of clients were young people in steady relationships who wanted to improve their lives by adopting contraception and protecting themselves against unwanted pregnancies, before getting married in the near future. They were not ‘promiscuous’, and love was very often the driver of their sexual experience. In this way, they willingly aligned themselves with BAC’s aims by displaying ‘responsible’ sexual behaviour. This element supports Claire Langhamer’s argument that love became paramount in post-war Britain[18] and challenges the notion of permissiveness. However, some young people also faced emotional struggles due to the new ‘libertarian/permissive’ climate. The chapter’s focus on the BAC clientele offers an alternative picture of young people in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s that functions as an obverse to the well-trodden narrative about ashamed unmarried mothers and the ‘problem’ young.[19]

The first section of the chapter engages with the difficulty of finding clients’ voices and experiences in the archives of public services. The second section offers a brief history of the creation of BAC and an analysis and overview of the clients in terms of age, class, gender and needs through the statistics compiled by the centres. The third section concentrates on clients' experiences with the service, while the fourth section assesses clients' influence on the development of BAC services. Finally, the last section deals with the issue of confidentiality for under-sixteens and shows the limits imposed on young clients' agency.

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[15] P. Cox, *Gender, Justice and Welfare: Bad Girls in Britain, 1900–1950* (Basingstoke, 2003).

[16] A. Bingham, L. Delap, L. Jackson and L. Settle, ‘Historical child sexual abuse in England and Wales: the role of historians’, *History of Education*, xlv (2016), 411–29; Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*.

[17] H. Charnock, ‘Teenage girls, female friendship and the making of the sexual revolution in England, 1950–1980’, *The Historical Journal*, lxiii (2020), 1032–53.

[18] C. Langhamer, ‘Love, selfhood and authenticity in post-war Britain’, *Cultural and Social History*, ix (2012), 277–97.

[19] D. Cohen, *Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day* (London, 2013).

Clients' experiences of sexual services: the challenge of finding sources

Any historian of post-war Britain who tries to document patients' or clients' experiences with public health services finds herself limited by the policy on data protection. Clients' records are either completely protected or under restricted access. Added to this difficulty is the fact that the lived sexual experiences of young people are themselves hard to come by, apart from in sexual attitudes surveys. This holds especially true when documenting young people's experiences with sexual health services. This chapter relies on a combination of sources that shed light on different aspects of the work of the clinics and young people's experiences. Documenting the activity of the centres is straightforward due to the archives held at the Wellcome Library. Minutes, reports, leaflets and educational material offer rich insights into the administrative and daily work of the clinics, while statistics collected by each centre provide glimpses of the demographics of the clients. In the first annual reports, statistics were broken down by age, occupation and gender as well as reasons for visiting the centre; however, since the mid-1970s, annual reports have unfortunately limited their statistical analysis to the number of clients attending the clinics.

These sources enable institutional work to be documented, but what remains obscured is BAC's influence on young people's sexual behaviours and, in turn, how their needs influenced the development of BAC's services. Oral history appears to be a promising method for gauging young people's experiences with BAC. However, reaching former clients of BAC has proved difficult, since they constitute a 'niche' population. This chapter uses six oral history interviews carried out with former clients of BAC recruited through social media. This method of collecting testimonies resulted in a small number of participants; the majority had visited BAC in their teens and ended up working for the charity.[20] All the interviews have been anonymized.[21] To complement these sources, case histories have been used as a way of grasping clients' experiences. Case histories regularly appeared in the annual reports of BAC, articles written by BAC staff and articles published in the mass media that covered the work of BAC. Such histories are problematic sources; though they were presented as 'reflecting typical clients', they were seemingly selected for their potential to attract attention and provoke emotion. Furthermore, they are few in number; this is mainly due to the fact that BAC members acknowledged the unethical aspect of presenting cases to the press:

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[20] Formal ethical approval received by email from the Director of Research, Paul Ward, Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, 5 Apr. 2019.

[21] All of the interviewees' names have been changed and all personal information has been removed.

> We are constantly being asked to provide 'cases' for interviews with journalists, radio, and TV producers, and though we would welcome the opportunity to show the kind of work we do, we cannot ask young people to expose themselves to the public even though it might result in more understanding and support. They are too vulnerable and public reaction can be pitiless.[22]

The confidentiality of the service was a key factor for BAC and was deeply valued by its clients. Another way of gaining insight into young people's experiences and subjectivity is the study of 'problem pages' in teenage magazines; several of the agony aunts for these magazines either were BAC members or maintained close relationships with BAC. Problem pages and advice columns constituted precious sources of information on sex and sexual health for their readers.[23] This was particularly the case for advice columns in teenage magazine at a time when school sex education was scarce and limited entirely to the facts of life or simply non-existent.[24] Similarly, many parents were seemingly too embarrassed to approach the topic with their teenagers, as revealed by many studies.[25] While some broached the topic, discussion was very often limited on the facts of life. Teenage magazines therefore offered an alternative way of finding sexual information. However, here again, the letters published were selected based on their ability to connect with a target audience. Nevertheless, by combining these different types of sources, we can develop a better understanding of the BAC's clients, their needs and the way BAC answered them.

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[22] Wellcome Library (WL), SA/BRO/D/10/1/2, 'Annual report, 1981'.

[23] A. Bingham, 'Newspaper problem pages and British sexual culture since 1918', *Media History*, xviii (2012), 51–63, at p. 54.

[24] J. Hampshire and J. Lewis, '"The ravages of permissiveness": sex education and the permissive society', *Twentieth Century British History*, xv (2004), 290–312; L. Hall, 'Birds, bees and general embarrassment: sex education in Britain from social purity to Section 28', in *Public or Private Education? Lessons from History*, ed. R. Aldrich (London, 2004), pp. 93–112.

[25] Friends were the main sources of information for many young people. See M. Schofield, *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People* (London, 1965); C. Farrell, *My Mother Said… the Way Young People Learned about Sex and Birth Control* (London, 1978). See also *British National Child Development Study, 1974*. Friends, TV and magazines were the main sources of information about venereal diseases. Parents and friends were sources of information for conception, but there was no reference made to methods of birth control.

The Brook Advisory Centre and its clientele

From the inter-war years up until 1974, when the National Health Service incorporated family planning under the NHS Reorganisation Act, multiple charities, agencies and spheres of activity conglomerated to form a network of what would today be called sexual health services. Key players among them were, of course, the Family Planning Association, the Marie Stopes clinic and the Marriage Guidance Council.[26] These voluntary services focused on providing contraceptive advice to married women or mothers only, as well as counselling couples on their marital difficulties. What made BAC distinctive was its focus on young unmarried people. In 1964, Helen Brook, director of the Marie Stopes Memorial Foundation Clinic and member of the Family Planning Association, opened the first Brook Advisory Centre in London, followed by a second in 1965. Other BAC centres were established across Britain, with Cambridge, Birmingham, Avon and Edinburgh among them. The use of the service offered by BAC grew drastically and the demand quickly exceeded the capacity of the centres. There was a long waiting list for each centre.[27]

The status of Brook as a charity meant that there were recurrent concerns about attracting and securing funding. In several cases, local and Area Health Authorities were reluctant to support BAC financially. In London, several Area Health Authorities provided financial support to BAC by paying per capita fees for their residents who visited the clinic; these authorities included Southwark, Camden and Hackney, to name a few.[28] In Birmingham, the Health Committee of the local council, which had a Conservative majority, flatly refused to support the work of the centre from its creation in 1966 up until 1972, when a new city council with a

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[26] On these organizations see for instance: J. Lewis, D. Clark and D. Morgan, ed., *Whom God Hath Joined Together: the Work of the Marriage Guidance* (London, 1992); D. A. Cohen, 'Private lives in public spaces: Marie Stopes, the mothers' clinics and the practice of contraception', *History Workshop Journal*, xxxv (1993), 95–116. Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*; C. Rusterholz, *Women's Medicine: Sex, Family Planning and British Female Doctors in Transnational Perspective 1920–70* (Manchester, 2020).

[27] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual reports of BAC, 1965'.

[28] London Borough of Southwark, *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health and Principal School Medical Officer* (1967), p. 31; London Borough of Camden, *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health and Principal School Medical Officer* (1967), p. 30; London Borough of Hackney, *Annual Report on the Health of the Borough* (1970), p. 29, in WL, London's Pulse, The Medical Officer of Health reports, online.

Labour majority made birth control free and available.[29] From then on, BAC Birmingham received financial help. The refusal was connected to a concern about morality, with the committee fearing that funding the service would condone 'promiscuity'.[30]

Despite these limited resources, BAC attracted a growing number of young people who were having their first sexual intercourse at a younger age than the previous generation. Indeed, the average age of first sexual intercourse fell from a range of nineteen to twenty-three years during 1951–5 to seventeen to twenty-one years during 1966–70.[31] The percentage of young people who had had sexual intercourse between fifteen and nineteen years old also increased. Two sociological surveys carried out at ten-year intervals revealed that in 1964, sixteen per cent of the fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds said they had experienced sexual intercourse at least once; this number had increased to fifty-one per cent by 1975.[32]

Therefore, as sexual experience became more common for young people and occurred at a younger age, more young people turned to the BAC for help and advice. The number of clients seen in BAC centres increased from 1,056 clients in 1965 to 59,265 by 1980.[33] The founder and chairperson of the centre, Helen Brook, used the term 'clients' from the first annual report onwards. However, this terminology was not consistent across the local branches; the majority of their annual reports used the term 'patients' until 1972, when they all changed to 'clients'. This change in terminology was important and suggests a turning point in the way BAC conceptualized its work and its relationship with its 'clients'. 'Patients' implies an unbalanced power relationship where the doctor knows best, whereas 'clients' implies agency and choice with a consumerist approach, where 'the patient is making the decision [and] becoming the Consumer'.[34]

The first report of the Brook Centre following its official opening in 1964 provided a glimpse into the clients' demographics and reasons for attending. Out of the 1,056 clients in 1965, the majority were young women, one-third were students, one-third were secretaries and the remaining one-third were professional people. BAC annual reports until the end of the 1970s used the terms 'girls', 'young women', 'boys' and 'young men' to refer to their clients aged between sixteen and twenty-five. The age of majority was twenty-one until 1970, when it was lowered to eighteen. However, the age of consent was sixteen. BAC initially only saw clients between sixteen and twenty-five in order to stay within the remit of the law.

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[29] WL, SA/BRO/D3/1/1, 'Birmingham annual reports 1966–72'.

[30] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual report of BAC, 1978'.

[31] H. Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800–1975* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 281, 292, 320, 323–6.

[32] Schofield, *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People*; Farrell, *My Mother Said.*

[33] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual reports of BAC, 1980'.

[34] WL, SA/BRO/E/11, C. Woodroffe, 'Brook and public opinion, Brook General Meeting, 1971'.

Under the Family Law Reform Act of 1969, a person over sixteen was medically an adult and able to consent to her own treatment, and thus had a right to professional confidentiality. BAC applied this principle. The upper age limit was not a consistent rule across BAC centres; clients were welcome to use the service for as long as they wanted, provided there were enough sessions to cater for them. However, the common practice was to refer clients to FPA clinics once they were married. From 1969, Helen Brook decided to allow under-sixteens to be seen in the clinics and prescribed contraception.[35] She recalled having taken the decision without informing her committee at an FPA meeting; the press was present and pushed the FPA to clarify its position on the subject. Brook stood up and said, 'Well, Brook will see the under-sixteens from now on'.[36] In the annual reports, under-sixteens were always referred to as 'girls' and 'boys', never as 'children'. These carefully chosen words suggested that clients, even those who were under sixteen, had already left childhood, which was characterized by parental protection. However, as we will see in the last section, under-sixteens were referred to as children by conservative lobbies. The terminology of 'girls' and 'boys' was also used by the popular press when reporting on BAC's services. Clients, on the other hand, seemed to perceive themselves as 'adults'. This discrepancy between the staff's and clients' understandings of age indicated the staff's belief that young people needed guidance during this crucial phase of their development; they were transitioning between childhood and adulthood, with entry into adulthood plausibly defined by marriage instead of majority.

'Girls' who visited the clinic were mainly between eighteen and twenty-five years old. Twelve per cent of them were either pregnant when they came to the centre or had given birth, and three per cent had undergone abortions. The majority of the clients were in 'steady relationships' and attended in order to obtain contraception. As a BAC doctor put it, 'They make a sincere effort to be responsible, listen objectively to what is said, very nearly always have come because they don't like their present method or don't trust it'.[37] Instilling a sense of responsibility in the client was a key task in BAC's work and central to its public narrative. BAC were regularly accused of encouraging promiscuity; their main defence was the affirmation that they helped young people in steady relationships to adopt responsible sexual behaviours, namely protected intercourse. Therefore, rather than creating a permissive society, BAC was dealing with the consequences of this permissiveness and trying to encourage a model of 'good' sexuality where commitment was paramount.[38]

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[35] 'On the pill by 16 starts row', *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1969.

[36] British Library, C408/014, National Life Stories, 'Helen Brook, interviewed by Rebecca Abrams'.

[37] 'Annual report of the Brook Advisory Centre', *Family Planning*, xv (1966), 47–50.

A minority of clients appear to have had more traumatic backgrounds and were referred by other agencies and social workers. In 1966, Helen Brook gave a conference to an audience of social workers in Westminster. She presented cases that did not fit the model of responsible young people in steady relationships, and exemplified how ill-equipped some 'girls' were to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy. Yet due to the help they received from BAC, these young women were from then on able to behave 'responsibly', namely to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies.[39]

In 1972, based on the statistics published by the centre, the 'typical' BAC client was a 'girl aged nineteen or twenty, a student, receptionist or secretary, who had come because a friend recommended the BAC. She had a steady boyfriend, her first sexual partner, who had been using condoms and she was prescribed the pill for greater safety'.[40] As Table 10.1 shows, between 1972 and 1980, this age group continued to comprise the largest proportion of BAC clients. During this period, an increasing proportion of under-sixteens also visited the centre. This new category posed additional challenges, as we shall see in the last section.

The reasons for attending the centre were recorded in the statistics, but unfortunately not broken down by age. Table 10.2 shows that friends and clients were the main channel for young people in finding out about the services, followed by the press. There were some local differences. For instance, in the Wessex branch, GPs were more inclined to refer clients to BAC than in Edinburgh, testifying to different medical views on the subject. Young people talked about sex, their sexual experiences, problems and anxieties with their friends and peers (as 'existing clients' implies), and word of mouth functioned as a powerful channel of information. These findings support Hannah Charnock's claim that friendship became a central facet in the way young people negotiated their sexuality.[41]

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[38] On the way responsibility became the key narrative behind BAC's creation see C. Rusterholz, 'Youth sexuality, responsibility and the opening of the Brook Advisory Centre in London and Birmingham in the 1960s', *Journal of British Studies*, forthcoming.

[39] WL, SA/BRO/E/11, H. Brook, 'Speech in front of social workers, Westminster, 1966'.

[40] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual report of BAC, 1972'.

[41] Charnock, 'Teenage girls'.

Table 10.1. Number and proportion of Brook Advisory Centre clients by age, 1972–80.

	1972	**1973**	**1974**	**1979**	**1980**
New clients	14,163	18,026	19,739	23,413	24,897
Total clients	29,240	34,244	41,637	58,040	59,265
Age (%)					
Under 16	1.5	2	3	5	6
16–17	15	15	15	15	17
18–19	24	23	23	19	20
20–21	21	21	20	16	15
22–23	16	15	14	12	12
24–25	9.5	10	9	8	8
26+	11	14	16	24	22

Source: WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual report of Brook Advisory Centre', 1972–1980.

Table 10.2. Proportion of clients referred to Brook Advisory Centres by source of referral, 1973.

	Average across four centres (%)	**Wessex**	**Birmingham**	**Edinburgh**	**London**
Transfer from another BAC	7	2	8	5	10
Client at BAC	30	30	43	36	19
Friends not clients	23	15	13	27	36
GP	5	13	6	3	2
Hospital staff	3	4	1	1	2
Educational institutions	2	5	3	1	1
Voluntary agency	4	3	8	-	3
Statutory agency	2	5	1	2	3
Press and printed media	17	17	14	24	19
Other	6	7	6	2	5

Source: WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual report of Brook Advisory Centre', 1973.

Table 10.3. Proportion of clients at Brook Advisory Centres by reason for attendance, 1972–80. Missing data represented by -.

%	**1972**	**1973**	**1974**	**1979**	**1980**
Referral for termination	-	7	9	-	-
Oral contraception	78	70	71	80	82
Cap	5	3	2	3	4
IUD	2	5	2	9	7
Other contraception	1	2	3	8	7
Pregnancy test	2	3	-	-	-
Discussion	11	9	13	26	-

Source: WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Annual report of Brook Advisory Centre', 1972–1980.

Table 10.3 shows that the majority of the clients (about eighty-five per cent) attended for birth control methods and advice. Among them, the pill was the favourite method,[42] followed by the cap in the early days of BAC, and then the Intra-Uterine Device (IUD). Some came for a pregnancy test or were referred for a termination, while an increasing number of clients wanted to discuss their sexual and emotional problems, showing that anxieties towards sex were common in young people. As reported by BAC staff, anxieties were mainly due to the fact that while sex was omnipresent in the mass media, young people were given conflicting messages, since premarital chastity remained the only behaviour accepted by 'the Church and the Establishment'.[43]

Young men also visited the centre. 'Boys' accompanied their girlfriends, and very often were the ones who booked the appointments over the phone. In 1973, twelve per cent of female clients were accompanied by their boyfriends or partners. Boys also often visited the centre in groups, as a dare, since they knew that the centre gave out condoms for free. This is indicative of a masculine culture where boys teased each other and boasted about contraception. Over the years, young men, albeit still a tiny minority, visited the centres on their own to speak about their fear about sexual performance and inadequacy. In 1981 London, male clients comprised two per cent of all new clients and three per cent in 1982; these numbers did not count boys who accompanied their girlfriends.[44] During the 1970s and 1980s, sexual health services such as BAC and the Family Planning Association tried to alter the gendered division of contraceptive responsibility by campaigning to involve boys in contraceptive decisions.[45] In 1982, a special session reserved for boys was set up in Walworth Brook, London, to cater for boys' needs and London annual reports specifically mentioned 'boys' as a sub-category.[46]

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[42] There was a drop between 1972 and 1973 in the proportion of women who were prescribed the pill. This was due to the media coverage of the adverse effects of the pill.

[43] WL, SA/FPA/A13/13, 'Brook Advisory Centre, aims and principles, July 1964'.

[44] WL, SA/BRO/D10/1/2, 'London annual reports 1980–1989'.

Clients' lived experiences with the clinic

Teenagers who attended the clinic of their own accord displayed agency in their sexual life; they came to the centre because they had specific needs and demands. The majority wanted to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies by going on the pill. For instance, Florence, born in 1968, whose mother worked at Birmingham BAC, visited the centre when she was seventeen to attain the pill. She remembered going to the centre regularly with her mother when she was a child and loved the friendly atmosphere. She explained, 'I went knowing what I wanted. I knew exactly what I wanted.'[47]

BAC's peculiarity rested in their emphasis on their clients' needs and their provision of a space where young people could discuss their feelings without any judgemental attitudes and in confidence. This focus on youth was a key reason why young people attended the clinic. Sarah, born in 1947, visited the BAC clinic in Edinburgh in 1968 when she was a student at university and wanted to go on the pill.[48] She recalled that she had first tried a family planning clinic in 1967, but had needed to lie about her marital status in order to obtain the contraceptive pill. When she learnt about the opening of BAC, she 'was over the moon, you know because it was intended [for] young people. It was bloody marvellous'. She went with a friend after having read about the centre in the press. When asked whether she discussed the subject with her parents, she replied that she had wanted to protect them from 'what she was up to'. There was also the possibility of seeing a GP, Sarah explained, but she did not trust the one in her neighbourhood, as some of her friends had reported bad experiences with him. Her friend's experience proved essential in Sarah's assessment of her options. Sarah's example, in particular her lack of communication with her family, refusal to see a GP and trust in her friend, was typical of many BAC's clients' experiences.

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[45] K. Jones ' "Men too": masculinities and contraceptive politics in late twentieth century Britain', *Contemporary British History*, xxiv (2020), 44–70.

[46] WL, SA/BRO/D10/1/2, 'London annual reports 1980–1989'.

[47] Private interview with Florence on the phone, 24 Feb. 2020.

[48] Private interview with Sarah on the phone, 19 Feb. 2020.

The lack of communication with parents was a recurrent motive for visiting BAC. Time and again, BAC's reports, as well as the media coverage of the centre's work, stressed the generation gap, due to which young people felt unable to discuss the topic of sex with their parents. BAC members tried to encourage dialogue between teenagers and parents, but confidentiality took priority. However, not all parents were reluctant or opposed to discussing sexuality with their offspring. Indeed, some parents brought their teenagers to the clinic. In an article covering the first year of activity of Birmingham BAC, the journalist interviewed a married couple; the wife had accompanied the couple's daughter to BAC. The journalist took great care to stress that this example was rather exceptional. Highly educated, with a 'background of liberal thought and experience', and exceptionally close to their seventeen-year-old daughter, these parents 'could discuss sex naturally and openly with their children'.[49] The daughter had told her parents about her sexual experience from the start, and the family decided it would be better for her to use contraception. The girl was nevertheless rather anxious about going to the centre on her own, and the mother told the journalist that her daughter 'was glad (she) had gone along with her'. Both mother and daughter were 'tremendously impressed with the happy atmosphere there among the girls as well as staff' – so much so, explained the mother, that she took leaflets advertising the centre home with her and gave them to her friends. Both parents stressed how important these centres were for 'avoid[ing the] futile anxiety which so filled the life of their generation'. This example suggests that some parents wanted to provide a different upbringing to their children from that of their own youth, when sex had been shrouded in secrecy. In so doing, they supported their daughters' greater freedom.

Another example of a parent's gratitude towards Brook could be found in a letter discussed in the annual report of 1981. Of course, BAC only published positive letters supporting its work and stressing the quality of its services. Nevertheless, this letter revealed that some parents were supportive of their teenagers' experiences. A mother wrote to BAC, thanking them 'for the marvellous way doctors and counsellors at Brook helped my daughter recently'.[50] Aged seventeen, the girl 'was distraught' to find she was pregnant, and the mother booked her an appointment at BAC 'to receive help and advice'. The letter explained that communication existed between the mother and the daughter but help was nevertheless needed at this 'difficult time'. The mother, who was also writing on behalf of her daughter, stressed how grateful they were for the quality of the service:

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[49] 'One mother's view', in *Birmingham Post*, 5 Sept. 1967, p. 8.

[50] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Letter from a mother, 1981 in annual report'.

> Everyone was so kind and helpful, and after talking it over and giving it much thought she had an abortion. It was such a difficult time for her but it would have been much worse without the understanding of people like Dr [*redacted*] and [*redacted*] the counsellor and of course everyone else she talked with but whose name we don't know.[51]

Clients turned to BAC because they trusted the charity more than their GP, who was generally their family doctor and from an older generation. It was for the doctor to decide whether to prescribe contraceptive advice and treatment, but young people over sixteen did not need the consent of a parent or guardian for medical treatment. Some had bad experiences with their own GP, who had proven to be judgemental or patronizing, while others simply did not investigate this option because of friends' bad experiences. The lack of faith in GPs, combined with the fact that BAC offered a trusted and confidential service, explained the popularity of the latter. For instance, in 1983, a married woman wrote a letter to the *Daily Mail* to 'put the record straight' in view of the bad publicity given to BAC by the newspaper. She shared her experience and stressed the positive influence that BAC had been on her when she was nineteen with 'a lot of family and personal problems' and was 'desperate'.[52] Before turning to BAC, she went to her GP, but did not receive the help she expected. She visited BAC for more than two years and received 'expert counselling' free of charge. Now happily married with a loving husband, two children and a beautiful home, she stated that she 'owed' the centre her current situation and praised 'the help and encouragement' she had received. 'It's an excellent service for a lot of young people and a place of trust for them', she concluded. The centre had a long-lasting positive impact on this woman, and she presented the help she received as transformative. This testimony also hints at another central element for young people: the fact that the centre provided a space where a trusted relationship could develop.

This trusted relationship was also valued by twenty-one-year-old Jenny who visited BAC in 1980.[53] Before turning to BAC, seventeen-year-old Jenny went to her family planning clinic in Sheffield, as there was no BAC in Sheffield at the time, and was fitted with an IUD. She then moved to Birmingham. Due to bad bleeding from the IUD, she was put on the pill by the university service. After leaving university, needing a prescription, she attended BAC. Jenny explained that another option would have been her GP, but she had soon rejected this option as he was very conservative; once, she had been to see him for a cold and had been asked about her marital status and whether she was on the pill, and encouraged to see the nurse about the natural method of birth control. During the interview, Jenny could not remember where she had learnt about BAC, but said 'everyone knew about it'. During her visit, she had a discussion about which method suited her best and asked to be fitted with another IUD. Thinking that the bleeding might have been coincidental, the BAC doctor agreed to give it another try. Since Birmingham BAC did not have an age limit, Jenny continued to use them until she was sterilized aged thirty-seven. Jenny's example shows determination on her part, a strong desire to attain her favoured contraceptive method and the trust she placed in BAC's services. Jenny's needs and opinions were respected, which explained why she used the BAC service until the end of her reproductive life.

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[51] The report was published with the names already redacted.

[52] 'Brook bond', *Daily Mail*, 17 Nov. 1983, p. 27.

[53] Private interview with Jenny on the phone, 24 Feb. 2020.

The ability of BAC to build and maintain the trust of their clients can be seen in the example of John. He burst into the clinic one evening with his group of friends, 'laughing and giggling and their comments and jokes got louder and more risqué'.[54] Peer influences played a key role in John's choice to visit the centre. However, one counsellor herded them into her room for a chat and succeeded in getting them to open up about their sexual relationships. John, who had a girlfriend and was having sex with her, was concerned about her and asked several questions. He listened carefully to the advice given and took the sheaths handed out by the counsellor. He then came back several times for both extra condoms and further advice, showing the trust he placed in the service. Eventually, he returned, together with his mother and his girlfriend. She was put on the pill, and John's mother eventually helped his girlfriend to broach the matter with her own mother. This example attests to the way John built a trusted relationship with BAC counsellors, which led him to involve his mother and girlfriend.

Not all clients visited the clinics in person; thousands of letters were sent each year to BAC local branches asking for advice. Excerpts from several such letters were provided in the annual reports. What is striking to the reader is the way that young clients framed their narrative around the values of responsibility and committed relationships so cherished by BAC. This way of presenting themselves was arguably a strategy to align with the BAC public narrative of what constituted good sexuality, namely protected intercourse in a steady relationship. However, the choice of letters containing these elements also reflected BAC's concern about its public image. A letter from a seventeen-year-old emphasized that she had been 'involved in a real and steady relationship for over a year'. Still a virgin, she was nevertheless considering a sexual relationship, since 'we both realize the extent of our feelings for one another and know that our relationship is deep and meaningful [enough] for sexual intercourse to form a natural part of it'.[55] She had rejected the idea of turning to her family doctor for help, fearing he would tell her parents. This fear might have been triggered by the 1970 case of Dr Browne, discussed in the final section, who broke his patient's confidentiality. These letters attest to the trust the young writers placed in BAC as a resource that preserved confidentiality and offered advice. Here, again, this letter shows that GPs were not perceived as a reliable source of help.

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[54] WL, SA/BRO/D/10/1/2, 'London annual reports, 1980'.

Similarly, another girl wrote a letter to ask where to obtain the pill, since she was planning to spend a weekend with her boyfriend. Although she felt the need to emphasize her morality, stating that she did not 'believe in sex before marriage', she nevertheless wanted to take precautions in case she 'should forget herself'.[56]

Besides writing to the centre, many teenagers were actively trying to find help and advice about their sex lives in other ways. One option was to write to magazine agony aunts to seek help with sexuality. Many agony aunts encouraged these young writers to go to BAC. An example among many was that of a sixteen-year-old who wrote to *She* for help about her lack of sexual experience. Created in 1956, *She* was a monthly women's magazine targeting the young. The girl felt pressured into having sex by her friends, who were teasing her because she was still a virgin; the girl wanted to 'keep herself for the man she [would] marry'. She ended her letter by stating she was tempted to 'give way'. The agony aunt, Denise Robins, emphasized in her reply that the decision to have sex should be made freely by the girl herself and recommended a visit to BAC: 'It's your life and your conscience. Whatever you decide don't risk pregnancy. You could go to the nearest Brook Advisory Centre. Women counsellors will talk things over with you and give you advice'.[57]

In addition to these 'mediated testimonies', there are indicators that clients were generally happy with the services they received. Many young people visited their local BAC on more than one occasion. Indeed, while

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[55] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Request for help in Brook Advisory Centre, annual report, 1971'.

[56] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Request for help in Brook Advisory Centre, annual report, 1971'.

[57] 'What's your problem?', *She*, Oct. 1978.

1979 saw 23,413 new clients, the number of returning clients was 34,627. The positive experience some young clients had with Brook led them to work for the charity later on. Jenny's experience with BAC, mentioned before, was so positive that she ended up working for them. This was also the case for Sarah, who attended Edinburgh BAC in 1968; she went on to work for BAC London in 1973. After university, she had left Edinburgh for a 'boring' job in Brighton. There, she was part of the Women's Liberation Movement and therefore very supportive of women's access to reliable contraception. She saw an advertisement for a job as personal assistant to the General Secretary of BAC. Having had 'a good experience at BAC' and sharing their views on enabling access to contraception for young women, she applied and was offered the job. She worked there for a year, doing administrative work as well as outreach work with schools.[58]

Clients' influence over the service

BAC prided itself on listening to its clients' demands and devising its policy accordingly. In this process, client experiences retained a central position. Several strategies were implemented by BAC to assess the quality of its services and evaluate the satisfaction and needs of its clients. As early as 1969, Joan Woodward from Birmingham BAC carried out a survey on a sample of BAC's clients (117 of the 846 female clients who attended the centre in 1967) in order to assess their needs and the extent to which they thought BAC services were meeting their expectations.[59] Clients were generally happy about the care they received and enjoyed coming to the centre due to the friendly atmosphere and because it 'was so nice to be treated as a responsible adult', as one client put it. Criticisms were nevertheless voiced, concerning the overcrowding of the clinics and the subsequent feeling of embarrassment. In addition, clients expressed the desire to be seen by the same doctor at each appointment, in order to develop a more trusting relationship. Trust in BAC services was crucial for clients, who needed a safe space where they could freely discuss their fears and anxieties. Finally, the survey revealed the need to develop counselling; young people generally needed more time to express their reasons for coming to the centre and needed counselling that was specifically aimed at understanding the anxieties they felt. Birmingham BAC, receptive to its clients' feedback, took measures to address these concerns; new clients were assigned a specific doctor, and a multidisciplinary team of counsellors, doctors and nurses was set up with additional sessions being reserved for longer counselling.

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[58] Private interview with Sarah on the phone, 19 Feb. 2020.

[59] WL, SA/BRO/SJ, 'Joan Woodward, survey of Birmingham Brook clients, 1969'.

Similarly, in Bristol, a pregnancy advisory session was created for the first time in a BAC centre, due to the high number of clients attending the clinic in distress, fearing that they were pregnant. These clients did not yet know whether they wanted to pursue the pregnancy or undergo a termination. The majority of clients' parents were ignorant about what was happening in their life. Counselling was therefore set up as a way of helping these clients consider their options and work out what they wanted. Emotional support, advice and help were provided.[60]

In 1973, 'talkabout' sessions also started in London. They were presented as an experiment to help BAC members 'consider how to improve the quality of their services'.[61] New clients were invited as a group 'to discuss birth control methods, their feelings and anxieties relating to a possible pregnancy and their motivation towards contraception' in an informal setting with music playing in the background, creating a relaxed atmosphere. While discussions were taking place among the group, each client had the opportunity to see the doctor individually and in private. These sessions were conceived as a place where young people could talk about their problems freely and where staff could gain a sense of clients' needs. What transpired from this experiment was that an informal atmosphere helped to create a trusted environment where young people could open up. Accordingly, music became a part of the daily routine of the clinic. More importantly, clients of the BAC explained that they valued having the time to discuss their emotions with the staff. Consequently, an additional counsellor was hired to allow more time for each appointment.[62]

In spite of the emphasis on clients' needs, some clients felt that BAC failed to meet their needs. For instance, a testimony of a former client found on a *Mumsnet* forum thread is indicative of the way agency was restricted. The anonymous mum answered a call for testimonies from BAC to celebrate its fiftieth birthday. Writing in 2013, the *Mumsnet* user described her bad experience in the 1980s when she refused to undergo an internal examination:

> I went to the Tottenham Court Road Brook clinic in the 80s. I was told I 'had to have' an internal exam and a smear test before I could get the Pill. I declined and I was offered counselling to help me 'get over my fear of being touched'. I had no fear of being touched! I was having lots of sex with

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[60] WL, SA/ALR/F.1: box 93, 'Brook Advisory Centre, annual report, 1972'.

[61] WL, SA/BRO/D10/1/1, 'Brook Advisory Centre, London, 1973'.

[62] WL, SA/BRO/D10/1/1, 'Brook Advisory Centre, London, 1973'.

> my BF! I didn't appreciate my birth control being held hostage until I had an exam and so I went to my GP who gave me a 12 month supply after taking my blood pressure.[63]

Although this testimony was made retrospectively, on an open web platform, and few details were given about the BAC user, it nevertheless informs us of resistance from BAC's users when they met with demands they considered inappropriate. In this case, the user was not a passive client but instead resisted the power of the doctor and found an alternative way of getting what she wanted. While this resistance was individual, some clients were less fortunate, and it was not staff members as such who represented obstacles to their agency but instead their own general practitioners.

Contraception and the under-sixteens

The majority of BAC's clients were over sixteen, yet there were an increasing number of very young clients coming to the centres to ask for help. As Table 10.1 shows, the percentage rose from just over one per cent in 1972 to six per cent in 1980. The issue of providing contraceptive advice to under-sixteens without parents' consent has already received scholarly attention. In particular, the Gillick case has been the object of in-depth studies, showing how conservative lobbies worked to reassert the supremacy of parental rights over doctors' duty to maintain confidentiality.[64] While these studies shed light on the main high-profile actors, they did not assess the impact that the Gillick case had on young people's behaviours. In addition, the Gillick case was not the first instance when confidentiality was broken. This last section of this chapter delves into the enduring debate over contraceptive provision for under-sixteens and the issue of confidentiality.

Sociological surveys have shown that the period under study witnessed an increase in the proportion of under-sixteens with sexual experience, from about five per cent in 1964 to twenty-one per cent in 1974 to fifty-two per cent in 1989.[65] Because the age of consent was sixteen, sexual relationships with and between young people under sixteen were deemed unlawful. The under-sixteens were considered a vulnerable category, requiring longer counselling sessions to ensure that these young girls had entered sexual relationships of their own free will. Young boys were a minority among the clientele and, as such, their sexual behaviour attracted less concern. Some young girls who attended the clinic were already pregnant and desperate for help and advice. Following the 1967 Abortion Act, termination was a possibility, but required the approval of two doctors and, for a minor, a parent. BAC members acted as facilitators for communication between young girls and their parents. When a young client was put on the pill, it was considered good practice at BAC to inform the client's GP, upon approval by the client, and encourage the client to tell her parents. This policy was implemented on the basis that the GP would respect the confidentiality of their patient. However, as hinted in several previous examples, young people turned to BAC because they distrusted their GP and feared the latter would breach confidentiality, jeopardizing the client's well-being.

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[63] Testimony written on 30 Oct. 2013 <https://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/site_stuff/1895087-Ever-used-a-Brook-clinic-or-service-Are-you-willing-to-share-your-stories-to-celebrate-Brooks-fiftieth-birthday> [accessed 25 April 2020].

[64] M. Durham, *Sex and Politics: Family and Morality in the Thatcher Years* (London, 1991); J. Pilcher, 'Gillick and after: children and sex in the 1980s and 1990s', in *Thatcher's Children? Politics, Childhood and Society in 1980 and 1990*, ed. J. Pilcher and S. Wagg (London, 1996), pp. 77–93.

[65] WL, SA/FPA/C/E16/5/8, 'Brook, confidentiality and under 16, background information'.

A case of breach of confidentiality by a Birmingham GP attracted public attention in 1970 because BAC members reported the culprit to the General Medical Council (GMC) for professional misconduct. BAC Birmingham did not want to take 'punitive' action against the GP, but hoped that the outcome would be a test case that would finally clarify the policy on confidentiality.[66] Going to the GMC was exceptional. In 1970, a sixteen-year-old girl attended Birmingham BAC with her boyfriend to obtain the pill. They had already had intercourse using a sheath, but feared this method was not reliable and wanted to go on the pill. The girl was hesitant to let BAC inform her GP, Dr Browne, since her father had a close relationship with him. The counsellor reassured her by emphasizing that the letter would be written in confidence.[67] However, Dr Browne broke his patient's confidentiality and informed her parents without telling her first, because, as he later explained, 'every attempt had to be made to point out to her the error of her ways'.[68] Following the case, Birmingham Brook took a strong stance by expressing publicly 'its determination to continue to assist the unmarried of any age who show a responsible attitude in choosing to consult its professional experts in order to avoid the risks of unwanted pregnancy and abortion'.[69] The centre guaranteed the 'strictest confidence to all its clients'. National and local newspapers covered the case extensively, amounting to more than 400 articles on the subject, with people supporting

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[66] WL, SA/BRO/D/3/3/2, 'Annual report, 1970'.

[67] 'Doctor and the error of girls' ways', *Evening Mail*, 5 March 1971.

[68] 'Doctor and the error of girls' ways', *Evening Mail*, 5 March 1971.

[69] 'Doctor and the error of girls' ways', *Evening Mail*, 5 March 1971.

Browne and parents' right to know about their children's sex lives pitted against partisans for confidentiality. While Dr Browne was found 'not guilty' of professional misconduct by the GMC, the British Medical Association nevertheless reaffirmed the supremacy of confidentiality by stating that a doctor could not ethically second-guess a patient's judgement of his or her best interest and must respect their refusal to allow information to be given to a third party.[70] Following the Browne case, BAC reported an increase in young people seeking contraceptive advice, especially those aged sixteen and under. In 1974, the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) advised that a doctor who provided contraceptives for a girl under sixteen even when he 'was unable to obtain a parent's permission was not acting unlawfully',[71] provided that he acted 'in good faith' to protect the girl against the 'potentially harmful effects of intercourse'.[72]

However, age became a major area of contention, with the provision of contraception for under-sixteens subjected to serious and sustained challenges and attacks by conservative lobbies. The contentious issue was the idea that under-sixteens were 'children' and as such, parents' rights and control took precedence over their children's agency and doctors' confidentiality. Above all, under-sixteens were conceptualized as 'children' who needed to be protected from permissive lobbies such as BAC.[73] These attacks culminated in the 1984 Gillick case, where Victoria Gillick went to court to fight her Area Health Authority's refusal to promise not to give contraception to her daughters under the age of sixteen without her consent. Her case was unsuccessful, but she continued to appeal to the court. In December 1984, the latter ruled in her favour, stating that the DHSS guideline was unlawful and that parents' consent prevailed over that of children. This decision was reversed by law in October 1985. However, Gillick's victory, albeit short-lived, had drastic consequences for young people under sixteen who were attending BAC clinics, in that they could no longer be prescribed contraception.

BAC members were deeply worried about the Gillick victory and wrote lengthy reports on its dramatic consequences for their clients. Jane was an example of a client badly affected by this new ruling. The first time she attended the centre to obtain contraception, she was fifteen and had already had an abortion. Prior to December 1984, Jane received counselling and contraceptive help at BAC. After December, however, the centre could not give her contraceptives without her mother's consent, which put Jane in an impossible situation. A committed Catholic, her mother refused to give her permission to use contraception despite knowing about the abortion. The mother stated that she would rather not have been asked. When Jane returned to the centre in 1985, she was pregnant again and desperate for a second abortion.[74] Adolescent girls were not the only ones affected; young boys' agency was also limited, as shown by the example of John. A regular at BAC, John started attending the clinic during his first sexual relationship when he was fourteen. Following a counselling session, he was given sheaths and thereafter attended regularly for more supplies. On one occasion, he brought his girlfriend along to discuss different contraceptive options. After December 1984, John only visited BAC once to explain that he could not face asking his mother for permission to be given contraceptives. After that, BAC staff never saw him again.[75] These two examples show that, while young people were taking steps to act responsibly and protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy, their agency was hindered by laws that put their well-being at risk.

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[70] 'Secret stayed sacred, BMA', the *Guardian*, 22 July 1971.

[71] WL, SA/FPA/C/E16/5/8, 'Young people advisory centre, 1975'.

[72] WL, SA/FPA/C/E16/5/8, 'Young people advisory centre, 1975'.

[73] On this history see Pilcher, 'Gillick and after'.

Conclusion

Through a close analysis of BAC annual reports, case histories, magazines and oral history interviews, this chapter has shown that young people's experiences with and expectations of sexual health services proved to be essential to the shaping of sexual welfare in modern Britain. The BAC charity offered a much-needed service at a time when youth sexuality was becoming a topic of public discussion and concern. With the opening of BAC, for the first time, sex was officially perceived as an important element of young people's welfare. However, this recognition had its limits, especially when it came to the under-sixteens.

BAC was set up as a way of teaching young people responsible sexual behaviours, namely protected intercourse in a steady relationship. There existed an inherent paradox in the service; while young people between sixteen and twenty-five were perceived as mature enough to make informed decisions about their sexual life, they were nevertheless deemed in need of guidance about displaying sexual maturity. However, this paradox was rarely denounced by clients. They valued BAC services and were happy to have found a confidential service where their needs and opinions were taken seriously and where they could develop a trusted relationship with

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[74] WL, SA/FPA/C/E16/5/8, 'Alarm and confusion prevent under 16s from seeking help, 17 May 1985'.

[75] WL, SA/FPA/C/E16/5/8, 'Alarm and confusion prevent under 16s from seeking help, 17 May 1985'.

BAC staff. Young people turned to BAC because they mistrusted their own GPs; they were often told about the service by their friends. Friendship functioned as a source of support for young people, and word of mouth meant the service was widely known. In turn, BAC took their clients' experiences seriously and tailored their services to meet their clients' needs and expectations.

Gender and age were key elements in the BAC service. The majority of the clients were young women, indicating that responsible sexual behaviour was considered a young woman's responsibility. However, over the years, young men also visited BAC, and the centre campaigned to encourage young men to share birth control responsibility. Age, on the other hand, proved controversial. The confidentiality of the service for those between the age of consent (sixteen) and the age of majority (twenty-one until 1970 and then eighteen) was guaranteed by BAC. However, BAC's policy to inform the client's GP, upon the client's approval, had resulted in a high-profile case of breach of confidentiality. Yet, the under-sixteens remained the object of sustained media and political attention. They were perceived as a vulnerable category and received longer counselling sessions to ensure that they understood the implications of sexual intercourse. In the view of BAC opponents, under-sixteens were children who needed to be protected from sexual activity, and the confidentiality of the service became the focus of a battleground, culminating in the short-lived Gillick case. This chapter has revealed that a close focus on age nuances the common narrative about the liberalization of sexuality. The sexual experiences of people under sixteen persisted as subjects of intense controversy. Age, at times, functioned as a barrier to young people's access to sexual health services.

Postscript: insights for policymakers and practitioners

Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor

This book ends by underlining why histories of children's experiences of welfare matter. The Introduction suggested that evidence from children's lives helps us to write rigorous, truthful and multi-vocal histories of welfare in modern Britain. In this postscript we propose that these histories also offer insights to those who have the power to shape the welfare of children today.

Historians usually miss this postscript out. Complexity, diversity, contingency and contextual specificity are essential to historical practice.[1] As a result, historians are more comfortable suggesting the critical value of 'thinking with history' than they are in offering a categorical pre-packaged 'answer' to contemporary dilemmas.[2] Important initiatives have sought to bridge this divide between the work of academic historians and public uses of the past.[3] None of the ten chapters in this book offer simple 'lessons from history' for the world of contemporary children's policy. This postscript suggests, however, that new conclusions emerge when we think about the volume as a whole. We draw out five important insights that we hope speak to the work of contemporary policymakers, practitioners and, indeed, anyone seeking to invest in children's lives today.

First, children's actions shaped welfare in modern Britain. This book argues that we can only understand the history of children's welfare if we listen to children themselves. This desire to engage with voice and agency is not merely a 'mantra' swallowed from the policymaking priorities of the last thirty years or the resulting academic norms of contemporary childhood studies.[4] Rather,

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[1] W. H. Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005), p. 11.

[2] For a book-length discussion, see: J. Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 6–7.

[3] V. Berridge, 'Why policy needs history (and historians)', *Health Economics, Policy and Law*, xiii (2018), 369–81, at pp. 370–2.

[4] E. K. M. Tisdall and S. Punch, 'Not so "new"? Looking critically at childhood studies', *Children's Geographies*, x (2012), 249–64, at pp. 249–51.

S. Pooley and J. Taylor, 'Postscript: insights for policymakers and practitioners', in *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, ed. S. Pooley and J. Taylor (London, 2021), pp. 273–8.

chapters in this book reveal that children's actions and perspectives emerge from the historical evidence as critical to the provision, delivery, interpretation and impact of welfare in modern Britain.

The book suggests some of the most common ways that this happened, each revealed by evidence from several distinct times and contexts. Children made individual, and often unpredictable, decisions about how best to secure their own welfare, sometimes refusing and resisting adult investments, at other times seeking out welfare and facilitating the expansion of services. Children were articulate about what they needed, through their words as well as their actions. Some benefitted from relations with adults who had the power to amplify their experiences and views, to create public outrage and to secure institutional change. More frequently, even while superficially accepting adult investments, children selectively and privately negotiated, repurposed or subverted the resources, time or expertise available to them. Through these everyday practices, children shaped the impact of adult-authored regimes, routines and ideologies. In particular, peer cultures of collective and tactical action influenced not only a child's own life, but also the lives of their peers. The young were providers and campaigners as well as recipients of welfare. They provided crucial unpaid labour as carers for other children, as well as promoting and fund-raising for children's services, including for initiatives from which they benefitted. Our state children's services, charities and, indeed, families are the shape they are today partly because of the actions of generations of young people.

Yet, popular histories of welfare in modern Britain remain dominated by a 'top-down' narrative focused on the progressive acts of educated, middle-class and powerful adults.[5] This is equally true for histories of children's welfare with its roll call of male, and less celebrated female, protagonists: Thomas Coram, Benjamin Waugh, Thomas Barnado, Margaret McMillan, Eleanor Rathbone, Myra Curtis, John Bowlby. This volume suggests that only by directing a spotlight on children's experiences can we truly reveal the impact and significance of these investments. We suggest that these new histories of children's welfare, told through the voices and actions of the young, also make a valuable contribution to the services that we have inherited today. Local and national government notably lack public narratives of how they have changed lives by investing in children's welfare for centuries. Sustained silence enables popular apathy and political hostility to public investment in the welfare of the next generation.[6] The

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[5] V. Berridge, 'History matters? History's role in health policy making', *Medical History*, lii (2008), 311–26, at pp. 322–6.

[6] For a policy analysis breaking this silence on the 60th anniversary of family allowances: F. Bennett and P. Dornan, *Child Benefit: Fit for the Future* (London, 2006).

UK state's erasure of its own history thus becomes urgent at a time of significant reductions in public investment in children's services and in state benefits paid to families.[7] If we are to value state investment in the young, we need evidence – and above all powerful stories – that demonstrate to policymakers and taxpayers alike why these investments matter.[8] In contrast to the state, some children's charities have pioneered the inclusion of children's experiences within their public self-narratives. Recent innovative projects include The Foundling Museum's 'Foundling Voices' oral history collection, The Children's Society's 'Hidden Lives Revealed' website and the collaborative exhibition 'On Their Own: Britain's Child Migrants'.[9] Yet, the near-identical online presentations of charities' histories remain brief one-sided stories of benevolent adult intentions and changing institutional structures.[10] This book has demonstrated that not only do archival sources exist to enable us to include real children's experiences in our histories, but that these marginalized and diverse stories offer unexpected and important insights into the long-term impact of welfare. Collaboration between historians, charities, archives and museums is crucial to enable us to uncover and share these histories.

Second, despite these common ways – across time and context – that the young shaped their own welfare, children's capacity to make change happen was subject to profound constraints. Specific historical contexts disempowered the young relative to their adult contemporaries. Chapters in this book collectively suggest a new u-shaped chronology of children's relative agency. Far from gaining rights and prominence across the last 200 years, we suggest that children were structurally disempowered en masse in mid-twentieth-century Britain. This targeted distancing of children from power was the result of two political changes: the growth of the professional and centralized adult bureaucracy of the nation-state and introduction of the universal adult franchise for women and men from 1928. Before the Acts of 1928 and especially 1918, working-class children were no more politically disenfranchised than their mothers or many of their fathers.[11] As chapters in this volume suggest, nineteenth-century children and their parents alike turned to informal means beyond the ballot box to effect change. These political actions included: collective action and protest; letter writing and public petitioning; familial connections and networks of kinship; and face-to-face interactions with local authorities that had greater power and expertise in social welfare than the national state. As chapters on education, healthcare and child migration reveal, the targeted disempowerment of the young was additionally the result of the mid-twentieth-century hegemony of universal theories of child development. By constructing the child primarily as a 'future citizen', who was in need of distinctive and intensive socialization by adult experts, the agency and diversity of children was ignored. In this model, voices needed to be trained in childhood to become future citizens, but they did not need to be listened and responded to as already present human beings. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act of 1989 were thus crucial legislative steps in recognizing the need to listen and respond to the 'wishes and feelings of the child'.[12] The principle of attending to children's agency was a departure from sixty years of adult practice, but it does form part of a longer tradition of children's action on behalf of their own welfare. The ability of service providers – be they state, voluntary or community based – to acknowledge and respect the wishes and feelings of children cannot be taken for granted. It is vital that practitioners and policymakers alike recognize the need to challenge proposals that, intentionally or otherwise, marginalize or silence the views of children.

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[7] 'Recent history of UK child poverty', Child Poverty Action Group <https://cpag.org.uk/recent-history-uk-child-poverty> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

[8] A. Evans, *The Myth Gap: What Happens When Evidence and Arguments Aren't Enough* (London, 2017).

[9] 'Foundling Voices', The Foundling Museum <http://foundlingvoices.foundlingmuseum.org.uk/index.html> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; for a sensitive reflection on the oral history project: S. Lowry and A. Duke, 'Foundling voices', *Oral History*, xl (2012), 99–108; 'Hidden lives revealed', The Children's Society <http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; for a review of the 'On Their Own' exhibition: C. Soares, 'Care and trauma: exhibiting histories of philanthropic childcare practices', *Journal of Historical Geography*, lii (2016), 100–7.

[10] See for instance: 'Our history', Barnados <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/who-we-are/our-history> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; 'Our history', The Children's Society <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/our-history> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; 'Our history', Gingerbread, <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/what-we-do/about-gingerbread/our-history/> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020]; 'Our history', Child Poverty Action Group <https://cpag.org.uk/about-cpag/our-history> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

Third, in this mid-twentieth-century moment of structural disempowerment of the young, state welfare policies enhanced inequalities between children. Children who were most dependent on public investments were increasingly disadvantaged, in comparison to the private familial investments received by the majority of children. This is most shockingly revealed by children's relatively positive accounts of institutional care in the three chapters focused on the nineteenth century, which contrast with children's negative experiences in the two twentieth-century case studies of institutional care. Nineteenth-century institutions, financed by a combination of charitable and state funding, made larger and longer investments in the lives of poor children than their families were able to. By the mid twentieth century, the relationship had been reversed. This was partly the result of the long-term rise in living standards experienced by families that were supported by a male breadwinner's wage, intensified by post-war economic affluence and full employment. Importantly, it was also the result of the structural under-investment by charities and especially the state in the lives of children in institutional care. This structural neglect was most extreme for older, disabled, and black and minority ethnic children who were most likely to remain in institutional care, rather than to be adopted or fostered. Public policy needs to recognize its responsibility to match – or indeed exceed – private investments in children's lives. As the award-winning poet and care leaver Lemn Sissay has noted, it is vital that society 'recognizes that a child in care is its greatest asset rather than treat it as its greatest threat'.[13]

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[11] For an accessible summary of franchise reform: G. Tyler, '1918 centenary: votes for some women and all men' (London, 2018) <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/1918-centenary-votes-for-some-women-and-all-men/> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

[12] Children Act 1989, c.41, Part 1, Section 1.

Fourth, the historical and longitudinal evidence offered by these case studies offers important empirical evidence for 'what works' to improve children's lives. First, the chapters suggest the transformative impact of adults who had the time, money, authority and desire to invest in a child's welfare. Many children turned to parents, but the chapters on institutional care also underline the significance of stable, well-paid and valued staff in determining the impact of institutional care on children's lives. Second, peer relations have consistently been significant. Children's welfare was enhanced by opportunities to form sustained and autonomous relationships with peers, including siblings. In societal and institutional contexts of disempowerment, peers offered opportunities for tactical and collaborative solidarity that mitigated the impact of oppression. Third, agency, autonomy and privacy were integral to children's experiences of welfare. Even if adults invested in children's welfare, these investments were experienced as harmful if they were made without giving young people appropriate information or decision-making power. None of these insights are unexpected. Yet, they are policies and practices that we continue to fail to implement in contemporary Britain. As Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England 2015–21, concluded in 2020: 'It shouldn't require a visit from the Children's Commissioner to remind our public services that children are humans too'.[14]

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[13] L. Sissay, 'A child of the state', TedxHousesofParliament, YouTube video, 4:11–16, 28 June 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uwj5XKzOadM&ab_channel=TEDxTalks> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

Finally, this book seeks to open up a dialogue with contemporary children's policymakers and practitioners. It offers an evidence-based and critical perspective on the last 200 years of British children's welfare that seeks to challenge some of our 'unexamined and misleading assumptions about the present and how it came to be'.[15] Above all, these histories reveal that progress in improving children's lives requires sustained investment and conscious prioritization. The past shows that progress is never linear or inevitable. This has fundamental implications for public policymaking. As the most politically disempowered group in Britain for the last century, we propose that public authorities have a particular responsibility to focus on the impact of policymaking on children. Just as the Public Sector Equality Duty has required public authorities since 2010 to consider how their decisions affect groups with 'protected characteristics', it is vital that authorities prioritize how all of their policies – not merely children's policies – affect the young.[16] Children's experiences of welfare are important, not merely because children are investments for the future, but because their lives matter now.

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[14] A. Longfield, 'Business plan 2020–21', Children's Commissioner, 31 March 2020 <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/corporate-governance/business-plan-2020-21/> [accessed 7 Sept. 2020].

[15] S. Szreter, 'History and public policy', in *The Public Value of the Humanities*, ed. J. Bate (London, 2011), pp. 219–31, at p. 222; 'Who we are', *History & Policy* <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/who-we-are> [accessed 27 Aug. 2020].

[16] 'Public Sector Equality Duty', Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty> [accessed 18 Sept. 2020].

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